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MUSIC JOURNAL

ISSUE #1 2euro/$3

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome! What you hold in your hands is the inaugural issue of Beautiful Chaos Music Journal. I could waste your time with a serenation of grandeur; however, this is only a small magazine. This 'zine will not altar any person's life. It is a platform to discuss and debate those things that do affect lives; politics and day-to-day issues, as well as the soundtrack to all of it. The intentions to this journal are to offer some decent, non-bias insights into the aforementioned categories. I encourage any readers to e-mail or write Beautiful Chaos with opinions of their own on any topic that they wish. This project is an outlet, a forum for the voice of the 'common' man/woman.

This first issue is just a chance to get my feet wet. It is smaller than future issues may be. In upcoming editions I will include more features including more interviews, a few of which have already been confirmed or conducted. The use of photographs will be more commonplace. There will also be articles and reviews on politics, books, and DVD's. On an issue-to-issue basis I hope to incorporate a steady growth. At the same time you will not see a polished lay-out for this magazine. I am not here to frame the writings with gold. The words are what are important. I refuse to deflect any attention away from them.

I aim to cover an array of musical genres in this publication. An emphasis will be placed on independent and smaller acts, as well as those who bring originality and excitement to the music landscape. I feel there is enough coverage of larger musicians in other publications. Therefore, I hope I can bring some small exposure to lesser known, but equally deserving bands. Hopefully anyone who picks up a copy can discover something personally relevant. So enjoy and don't hesitate to contact me at: BEAUTIFULCHAOS010@YAHOO.COM.

JOHN

EDITOR'S NOTE [PART 2]

I need to apologize to some people who have been waiting for this issue for some time. For those few who have been gracious enough to support something like this from its infant stage. I am wholeheartedly sorry. This issue is two months overdue. I placed heavy strains on myself to complete the writing of this issue in January. I deprived myself of sleep many-a-night to complete it on time. When it came time for lay-out, I reached an all-time high in frustration.

I was introduced to someone in November, who studies computer graphic design at college. He volunteered to do the layout free of charge. Now, I have always believed in doing things myself, so as to not have to pass the buck of excuses on to someone else. However, for two months I have been chasing this person for lay-out.

So I finally quit waiting and decided to give this thing a go myself. It's very primitive but I just wanted to complete it, so I can begin concentrating on issue #2. Hopefully, by the time I complete that issue, I can locate someone more reliable or purchase some appropriate software to do a proper job on the design. Once again I'm sorry to those who have been waiting, (especially the very generous folks at Fat Wreck Chords Europe), this has definitely been a learning experience.

JOHN

KEEP YOUR EYES ON...

The Beautiful Mistake: **www.thebeautifulmistake.com**
This Minnesota band has released an EP as well as a full-length entitled 'Light A Match, For I Deserve To Burn' through The Militia Group. The band plays a super-melodic brand of post-hardcore that can be both dreamy and brutal in its presentation.

Homesick For Space: **www.homesickforspace.com**
This New York band was formed from the ashes of the classic I, Robot. They released a self-titled EP on Immigrant Sun Records and their debut LP entitled 'Unison' on Lakeshore Records. Their sound has very little, if any similarities to I, Robot and they have a brilliant reputation as a live act. They incorporate moody piano and organs into an astounding jazz influenced indie sound.

Rock Kills Kid: www.rockkillskid.com
This Southern Californian band released their debut self-titled EP on Fearless Records earlier this year. They have a pop-punk sound with moody darker influences. The songs are still about girls and relationships, but not in an annoying or whiney way.

Denali: **www.denalimusic.com**
Members of underground heroes Engine Down form a female-fronted trip-hop group (the Engine Down members have just announced their departure from this group to focus on ED full-time. They will be replaced). This Virginia group released their self-titled debut on Jade Tree Records. The follow-up LP is due out in October of 2003. The group's atmospheric indie-rock is complimented perfectly by the cold crooning of singer Maura, in similar vein as Portishead leading lady, Beth Gibbons.

Miracle Of 86: **www.miracleof86.com**
This New York City group released their self-titled debut album and 'Kevin Kolankowski' LP on Immigrant Sun Records before moving to Lakeshore Records to release their current album 'Every Famous Last Word'. The band is often dubbed "emo" but fit more into a well-rounded indie rock category. Their recent effort has seen them tighten their sound beautifully with upbeat grooves and light-hearted lyrics.

To See You Broken: **www.toseeyoubroken.com**
This Seattle all-female hardcore outfit released their debut eight-song CD on Excursion Records last year. This group shows that ferocious hardcore isn't just a man's game. These ladies can chug out the metal induced hardcore with the best of them. If you like your hardcore fast and vicious, check out this blood-curdling band!

Berkeley: **www.berkeley.tv**

This Donegal (Ireland) 3-piece has been drawing loads of praise on the Irish live circuit since their inception in 2001. The band somehow also managed to get legendary producer Steve Albini to record their debut full-length album in his Chicago studios last year. The album, 'Hope, Prayers and Bubblegum' was released in March of 2003. The bands sound has the energetic feel of DC post-hardcore bands such as Fugazi with light and soaring vocals eerily reminiscent of Counting Crows singer Adam Duritz. These lads will be a band to contend with once they find their way out of Ireland's underground.

The Hurt Process: **www.thehurtprocess.com**

This British band is already being lumped into the new "screamo" category. Their sound has a lot of similarities with the current trendy bands in hardcore, but they have more substance to back up their brutal debut album, 'Drive By Monologue'. The band combines the metal guitar riffs with some simple pop hooks and dual vocals that will shred each eardrum. If there is going to be any of these "screamo" bands remaining in 5 years time, this is one band I would put some money on.

Copeland: **www.thecopelandsite.com**

This Central Florida band released their debut full-length, 'Beneath Medicine Tree' on The Militia Group in spring of 2003. The band plays an indie-fused type of rock music. At one moment they can go from a delicate subtlety to galloping intensity. This is just simply beautiful music that anyone could appreciate. I recommend this band for fans of Coldplay, Sunny Day Real Estate, Dashboard Confessional and Travis.

Dark Day Dawning: **www.darkdaydawning.com**

This metal/hardcore group hails from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Often clumped into the flourishing hardcore scene, I feel they are more of a metal band in every aspect of their sound aside from possibly the poetic lyrics, which are uncommon in the metal world. The band released a few self-recorded cassette tapes before releasing an EP and their debut full-length, 'Nothing That I Wouldn't Give' on Resurrection AD Records. This is the most intelligent metal I've heard in a long time. I just hope the band doesn't try too hard to include unnecessary melodic breakdowns. There are a few on this album. Unfortunately as BC was going to press, DDD announced they were splitting and playing their final show in November 2003.

Woodstar: **www.woodstar.ie**

This Irish indie-rock band got their start in the summer of 2000 in Limerick. They released their debut EP 'Time To Bleed' in May of 2002 and their debut full-length, 'Life Sparks' this year. They play a sub-dued melodic rock that is never too flashy or unnecessary. Perfect music to relax to or just let your mind wander. Nothing original, but that doesn't mean its not good! This band will break the UK soon, but I don't foresee them accomplishing anything in the States. Does it really matter though?

Days In December: **www.daysindecember.com**

This British band from Harrow is extremely new having only released one single, 'Comfort In Surrounding Space', on Alaska Recordings. They have a vast array of influences and it comes through on the debut single. Classified in the wide post-hardcore scene this band offers something most in punk music don't, a positive feeling. The grooves and beats are tremendous and downtrodden but the vocals are delivered with such promise that you can't help but feel good for some reason. This band will explode in the UK any day now. Keep you eye out for their debut EP.

SEMI-INTELLIGENT OPINIONS

Q: What is 'punk'?

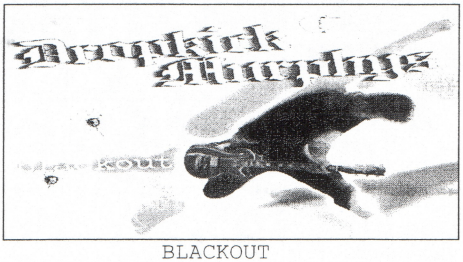
A: This is a question not one single person would answer the same as another. In terms of answer diversity, it parallels the question "what is the meaning of life?" In my opinion 'punk' is an attitude, a mindset. Unfortunately 'punk' has always been more of a fashion than anything, to most people. The 'punk' trend comes and goes every once in awhile. Currently it is 'in' fashion. With every peak comes an influx in bands and fans. The underground mainstays then feel intruded and begin to backlash. This is when you here the taunts "you're not punk!" The elitism in punk creeps to the forefront. Just because your physical appearance does not include unnatural hair colour, tattoos, piercings, or safety pins; does by no means, indicate how punk you are. This is just people being close-minded

The same holds true for bands. I for one am ecstatic when a great, hard-working band inks a major label deal I think, "they deserve it", much more than Limp Bizkit does. Yes, it's great to listen to a band that no one else knows about, your own personal secret. I had that for years in AFI, amongst others. Now I'm overjoyed to see them rewarded for their efforts with recognition and better avenues to become a better band. There is always other 'no-name' bands to discover, that's the beautiful thing about punk and independent music in general.

Getting back to the fans, who cares if you look punk? If you wear punk outfits because your favourite bands do; then you are playing right into the corporation's hands, be it record companies or sales marketing. Don't get me wrong; if you truly love the look, then sport it, but only because YOU want to. Punk was always anti-establishment. Not becoming another mindless sheep in an ever-growing herd. Punk equals individuality!

Form your own beliefs, your own morals, stay open-minded, and adjust your life accordingly. If you eventually form an opinion that contradicts an already existing belief, do not be afraid to change it. The worst thing you can do is narrow your brain as to not admit you may have been wrong in the past. Everything in life evolves. Change is natural. Live your life your own way, that's why punk is a mindset not a fashion. Your style of dress is irrelevant. I hope the kids today can learn to think for themselves and truly be 'punk'. Even if that means listening to Hootie And The Blowfish in a three-piece suit!

Dropkick Murphys



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FUNERAL FOR A FRIEND

Before returning to Ireland late in September, I heard that Long Island's The Movielife would be opening for Funeral For A Friend in Dublin this October. The Movielife are an excellent group that are nothing short of extraordinary in a live setting. I was lucky enough to see them again this past July and as usual they tore up the stage in Philadelphia. Funeral For A Friend are a Welsh band that I was unfamiliar with, aside from the sight of a few advertisements in some UK magazines. They were one of the opening acts for From Autumn To Ashes, along with Cave In and Everytime I Die, on a recent US tour. I was able to catch the Philadelphia date of that tour. I was very impressed. With only a couple of small label EP's under their belt and a debut full-length album pending, this band was definitely tight. I was already looking forward to catching them in Dublin with The Movielife.

Imagine my heartache when I was informed that The Movielife unexpectedly called it quits a few weeks prior to the show. As shocking as that news was, I found comfort that week in a CD entitled 'Casually Dressed And Deep In Conversation', the debut full length from Funeral For A Friend. This CD became comforting simply because it made me immensely eager to hear these tracks live again. I witnessed their live show a month prior with no knowledge of their songs or sound in general. Now I would see them with some previous experience as an arsenal for judgement. Sure it would be better to see two possibly three (Million Dead were advertised to support also) great bands, rather than one (a communication error prevented MD from playing as well). I took solace in the fact that my euros would be well spent.

To replace both original support acts, Dublin punk outfit On/Off were asked to open the gig. Hey did an unexpectedly good job. FFAF next came on to the stage and ravaged Dublin for the first time in their young careers. They were even more impressive than they were in Philadelphia. I feel the longer set complimented their live show immensely. The complete review for this show can be read in the review section of this issue.

Prior to the show I spoke with FFAF singer, Matt Davies. Coming to this show I had no intentions of speaking to the band on behalf of Beautiful Chaos. I was simply attending the show as another in a (very) long line of new fans. I would, of course, be penning a review of the show but had no intentions of interviewing the band. So when Matt expressed an excitement at my Atticus hat and From Autumn To Ashes shirt, I felt the need to express my newfound interest in his band after seeing them in Philadelphia.

After a few words were exchanged I decided, if his band mates were half as friendly as he was tonight, then I should really seize the moment and chat with them after the show. So I inquired with Matt if a few questions to the band would be possible. He, without hesitation, said of course and asked me to meet him at the merchandise booth after the show.

When the show was over I met up with Matt again who chatted with me again briefly. During this time, Matt was engulfed by an overly excited group of teenage girls. He calmly greeted, hugged, autographed their tickets and posed for a few photos before introducing me to band mates Gareth Davies (bass), Kris Roberts (guitar) and Darren Smith (guitar). Matt apologetically asked if I minded that he didn't participate, as he was feeling under the weather and wished to retire for the night. I proceeded to ask the guys a few short questions. First, I apologized to the band for having poor preparation and questions. As I spoke with the three, it was irrelevant. The casualness of the situation led this to be a short conversation interrupted awkwardly by my sub par questions from time-to-time. I would like to stress that none of the band's statements will be exact quotes. I had not brought my recorder with me; therefore, I was forced to jot the band's remarks in shorthand. I hope I do not misrepresent the band in the following paragraphs if I did; I apologize, for this was not my intention. I feel I relayed their responses justly though.

As I previously mentioned in this article, FFAF recently embarked on their first US tour. Seeing as they have an overwhelming amount of media exposure in the UK, I decided to ask them about this US tour, seeing as they are relative unknowns across the pond. The felt the tour went extremely well, "rocking" as they put it. Some of their favourite shows were Seattle and New York City as well as a show on Omaha where Gareth ripped his hand open mid-set and continued to play with blood pouring down his arm. He showed me his recently healed wound with great excitement. He reminded me of a young boy showing off his scars in the schoolyard. I inquired as to how they feel they went over in the States. The people around me in Philly and myself obviously liked FFAF, but I also have recently read some negative US press on them. The group feels the audiences received them well, however, that stressed that they will have to work harder to win over crowds in America. I mentioned that there is an over-saturated market in the US for these new so-called post-hardcore or screamo bands. They think there is a place for them, however, and it will just make it more difficult to sell out an American show.

I feel that Ireland is at the short end of the stick in terms of quality foreign bands coming to play here. I believe its much more difficult for the Irish to hear about good bands. Their only methods are UK magazines, UK music television or the Internet (which is pointless if you don't know what to look for). Unfortunately the music fans have to

wait until a band is popular enough, and then wait out countless UK tours in hopes they will land on these shores one day. I asked FFAF to name a few bands they personally feel readers should know about. They mentioned UK bands Hondo Maclean and Days In December, as well as Transgression. So whether you download or buy their music, try and check those bands out.

Every music fan, whether in a band or not, has a dream concert line-up. So what is FFAF's dream line-up to be a part of? Well let's just say the boys obviously like their 80's metal. Those bands are as follow: Queen, Metallica, Bon Jovi, Iron Maiden, Slayer, Megadeath and AC/DC. Wow, all that with FFAF sandwiched in there somewhere. Well it won't ever happen, but that's why it's called a "dream" line-up. Actually getting to play with at least one of those bands will become a reality soon enough.

Next on FFAF's agenda following this current tour is a short opening stint for their heroes, Iron Maiden in December. And believe me, they couldn't be more stoked about it. So if seeing metal legends Iron Maiden isn't incentive enough, you have another amazing band on the bill as an excuse to go.

Aside from the Maiden concert at the Point Depot, expect the FFAF lads to be gracing the Emerald Isle again soon. They had a great time and loved the crowd, even though there were some PA problems for them at this particular venue. If you weren't there the show was excellent and my only regret was that The Movielife were not here as well. So as a final question to the trio I asked if they were disappointed with the absence of the Long Island group. Kris put it best with a "fuck yeah" to that particular question. They had never played with The Movielife aside from at this past Reading Festival and they were unaware of any problems within the band. When FFAF were in America, however, they received a call stating the The Movielife had split up. They as I was, were extremely shocked.

So if you haven't picked up the new album yet, I think it is in your best interest to do so. When they get back to Dublin, grab a ticket quick, I guarantee it will sell out fast. I'd like to once again thank FFAF for their time. I wish them the best of luck and hope they can break the difficult US shores. If they cannot, it would be America missing out.

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THE EMO DIVISON

HOW THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA FRACTURED THE EMO GENRE

Has anyone noticed that the dreaded emo tag is being applied to just about every act to come out of the American underground? A great diversity of groups are dubbed emo by the mainstream media. From Thursday to Dashboard Confessional, Thrice to The Get Up Kids, and Hot Water Music to Jimmy Eat World; every band is getting emo slapped all over them. What most people, especially the young fans and most of the media, don't know is where emo came from; let alone what type of music it is.

Obviously the term emo derives from the word 'emotional'. The phrase was first coined in the mid to late 80's. The DC area hardcore scene was thriving in the wake of Minor Threat. The bands in that scene, who were usually on the legendary Dischord record label, were itching for a sound of their own. Most of these groups became disenfranchised with the current state of hardcore. The HC scene was originally an embracing scene, a positive statement on one's own lifestyle.

The other large hardcore scene in New York City was becoming overrun with violence. Where the music was often dumbed-down for a more gang-like mentality. Shows were an excuse to get into a fight. Many new bands were encouraging the violence and hateful attitude. Their lyrics were not about freethinking and positivity, however, they were ignorant criticisms bashing anybody not similar to them. Of course there were always exceptions. It's a shame that today a minor element of the aforementioned ignorance still exists in hardcore. It's unfortunate that hardcore fans can be some of the most critical and jaded towards 'outsiders' or those different from themselves. I believe, currently, they are trying to protect their scene from those who have infiltrated it due to the current popularity of hardcore music. It's difficult to fault them for this. They want to keep something they feel is their own, not allow it to be a fashionable trend.

With the Dischord bands wanting something more worthwhile, other than violence, they began writing about more everyday personal issues. Bands such as Rites of Spring and Soulside gave the hardcore fans an alternative. Intelligible lyrics that had meaning for the singer and hopefully the person listening as well. Now, I don't agree with the practice of attaching a new label to anything that sounds different within a specific genre, but it is common practice within any form of music. Washington DC became the birthplace of emo. So, why then is there so much credit given to either Sunny Day Real Estate or Weezer's 'Pinkerton' album?

This is where the fracture of emo takes place. Weezer's 'Pinkerton' record was a commercial failure that sent Rivers Cuomo (Weezer's guitarist and singer) into a lengthy absence from the music world. Rivers denounced the album as a mistake. He concentrated his depression and problems into his song writing for that album, and the record that blossomed was unusually dark and sombre. This was a severe contrast from the band's poppy and quirky debut album that launched the group into mainstream stardom. Something odd occurred while Weezer were in their long hibernation, however. A new wave of young musicians continued listening to 'Pinkerton' and began writing music themselves in similar vein. When these groups began to emerge in the late 90's with a healthy underground following, they openly cited 'Pinkerton' as one of their most influential records. If this record was one huge influence on the new wave of emo groups, then the other big influence was definitely Sunny Day Real Estate.

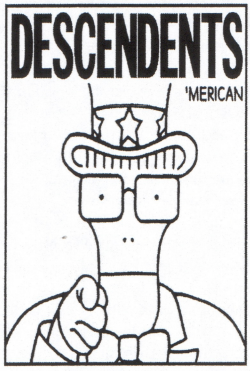
Sunny Day Real Estate emerged out of Seattle during the end of the hype-crazed grunge years. The only problem was they sounded nothing like the other Seattle groups that hit it big. Nor did they sound like the re-emerging punk scene led by Green Day and The Offspring. SDRE never left the underground; in fact they never even became that big within the underground itself before they disbanded in 1995 (The band did return in 1998 to record their third album before disbanding again. They once again reformed in 2000 for their last album and proceeded to break up for good). Don't get me wrong, they had a good following and were already receiving the respect of their peers during their time together. While SDRE were duking it out in the underground, some fanzines began whispering "emo" in regards to the band.

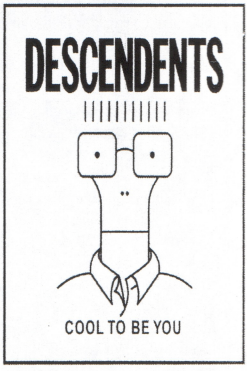
Once again, with the young new bands citing them as influences, SDRE gained popularity and became the forefathers of the current emo groups. In the current state of emo, they are still recognized as such by the mainstream media. This is because they divided emo. It still exists in its original hardcore form, however, that scene is still pretty

much underground. Only when one of these bands becomes popular, do they finally 'earn' the emo label like Thursday or From Autumn To Ashes. Even then it seems the media has to evolve the term to "screamo" or "emo-core".

To the mainstream media, emo is what was born from SDRE and 'Pinkerton'. It is this indie-rock based form of music, that the media would rather have labelled emo since it is more marketable to them. The hardcore-based emo will never spawn a hit single. Therefore, they ignored it, until certain bands demanded their attention. And not to confuse their naïve consumers, they brand it screamo instead. The bastard child of emo that will allow them to market the music towards the emo crowd. Personally I find a lot of rap and blues music to be very emotional. Does this mean we'll have to start dubbing Muddy Waters and DMX, R&Beemo? Emo is a shallow term, a shortcut to thinking. Basically, any scene that gains any fanfare these days will be lumped together and have a marketable tag placed on it. Unfortunately emo was used twice, therefore, the media had to give birth to screamo. Whatever tag a particular band is given, just remember the music is all that matters, not what label or scene it fits into.

DESCENDENTS





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MILLION DEAD

On November 7th new London buzz band, Million Dead came to Dublin to play The Hub. I had only heard two of their songs from videos on Scuzz and MTV2. I decided to set up an interview before their show though and hopefully see what all the fuss in the UK was about. Well I eventually saw what all of the fuss was about after the interview, during their set that night. Beforehand though, I was able to sit down with all four members of the band [Frank (vocals), Cameron (guitar), Julia (bass) and Ben (drums)]. The band members were very courteous and hospitable. I thank them again for their time and participation.

***- How exactly did this band come together? How did the band members all meet?**
J- Basically, I came over here and was gonna start a band. I first met Cameron through a mutual friend and thought he was alright. We began to jam, it worked out well. He was working with Ben at the time and then Ben got involved basically, it was sounding alright. Then we needed a vocalist and then Ben brought Frank in, because they used to be in a band together.
***- That was Kneejerk, right?**
J- Yeah it was Kneejerk. The legendary Kneejerk. It was just simple like that really.
***- Which band member came up with the moniker Million Dead and why do you feel it's an appropriate name for your group? Does it even have a meaning, or is it just a name?**
C- We think its shit, but…
J- No, no, no! Actually I don't think its shit!
***- Alright, so you're torn on this one?**
J- No, no I like the name. I think its good.
B- We had a gig coming up. We had been kinda looking for a real name and stuff for ages. It is one of the hardest things to do.
F- The hardest thing to do ever…
B- Probably the hardest thing you'll have to do in a band. Frank and I were talking about the band Refused, and that song 'The Apollo Program Was A Hoax' had the lyrics about a million dead. They were having a couple sessions at the time and I just turned and went "what about Million Dead?" right? Cam's precise response was "hmmm" [shrugs shoulders]. So that's why we're called Million Dead.
***- So it was a last minute decision?**
J- [Laughs] Yeah!
F- I don't think we have any intentions of conveying correct meaning to a band name.
***- Some bands place so much emphasis and meaning to their name while others just don't want anyone to know what it means…**
J- No, it doesn't have a meaning. I like it because it's a name that is quite eye-catching and also easy to remember. Short, simple, Million Dead!
C- It makes…[incomprehensible]
J- Yeah, it is a bit…
C- Wholesome!
***- Something you can bring home to your mom.**
C- That is one thing about Million Dead, it's hard to take you seriously with a fucking name like that.

B- Yeah, you're trying to persuade them you're doing something with your life. Do you know what I mean? "Yeah, I'm playing in this band and doing this and doing this" ["oh, what are you called?"] "Million Dead" And they go..."right..."

***- Obviously each band member has his/her own influences. What are some of your shared musical influences?**

J- There's probably a couple of shared influences like Fugazi.

F- I don't know where you draw the line between, sort of an influence and a band you just listen to. I guess there isn't one. But there are some bands we all like to different degrees. I think everyone likes Fugazi, everyone likes Sonic Youth. And of course... An influence to me is... I joined this band to do this...I understand no band is trying to sound like another.

***- Is there any bands actually that you all just share a taste for basically, besides Fugazi and...**

B- I think we all just try and get together and write something we're all happy with, you know? Usually what it comes down to, is if someone's really adamant and not happy with something about the music, we always just try and get something together...

C- How 'bout the question there Ben?

[Everyone laughs]

***- Let him go with it!**

B- ...another thing I'm influenced by, I think we're all influenced by everything we hear. If you hear something cool on a record that you don't even know who its by ...that's an influence, you know?

C- There's certain classic things that we all like, Slayer you know? Metallica, stuff like that. We're all influenced by metal. Everyone likes Led Zeppelin but you can't say we...you know we all like Sabbath...

***- I understand! You like those bands but you would never copy or put their music into your sound.**

C- Especially bands like Fugazi and Sonic Youth who were fucking awesome, kinda straight-up solid ...that play rock or kinda rock/pop kind of music. And over like 20 years they always remain solid. You know, they might change their style a little bit but they're still doing clearly what they wanna do with it. As a band that presents a really influential...what we would like to be, you know? To be able to be here in 20 years time after putting out 10 or 15 albums, still doing interesting stuff.

J- Yeah!

***- Are there any current or new bands that you are into?**

J- Ummm...Jarcrew!

[Rest of band]- Yeah!!!

C- A Welsh band called Jarcrew.

***- They're playing on the upcoming tour with Minus and yourselves, right?**

J- Yeah , they're wicked!

C- Another band called Kosheen.

J- They fucking...yeah!

F- There's a couple of bands around. You know, we can talk for the next few hours about every band we like.

***- To be honest I have yet to hear your album since you can't get it here in Dublin. I looked in almost every store...**

[Band shocked]

J- Oh, really!!

C- What about HMV?

***- HMV does not have it!**

F- They were told we're going to be in Dublin.

[A short discussion commenced about local shops carrying the CD and that they should be able to order it through their distribution]

***- Alright! Well I feel a little ill-equipped here, having not heard the album before hand. But it seems every major rock magazine in the UK has given your debut album a spectacular review. Does this place any added pressure on the band performing or when it comes time to record again?**

J- Basically, it's encouraging!
B- The one thing I always do, it's attacked me a few times, I stand back and go "OK, a lot of hype, do we live up to it?" A lot of times I stand back and go "you know we're not as good as they say we are, so we better fucking get that good!" Which I think has helped us a lot. Certainly that's the way I look at it.
***- So it helps you push yourself?**
B- I feel with this album I certainly wasn't expecting a 5K review [reference to Kerrang Magazine] and I wasn't expecting these top reviews…
***- Especially with a debut album.**
B- Yeah!
J- And the review we got in Q was really good too.
B- Yeah! All the magazines have been giving us great reviews, you know? Personally I think it's great. I'm really proud of it!
C- I think there would be pressure if that…we had sold half a million records and we'd have to match it. But that would be pressure to record a second album. But you know, we're not sort of in a record deal like that with the record label we've got. We're not in the situation to be sort of pushed.
J- Yeah!
F- I think as an ideal, the only thing that should put pressure on you, as a musician in a band is yourself and the rest of your band. Obviously, you know, that's not always the case but that would be ideal really. Umm…so I wouldn't even want it to put pressure on us or anything, you know, because there's enough pressure there already. I listen to the album, I think I'm really happy and then the first thing that pops into my head, "right what are we gonna do next that's even better". And then there's a lot of pressure there anyway because, yeah I want our next record to be better. I wouldn't want to go back, I want it to be better.
J- Yeah! I felt it was really encouraging. It makes me want to do better and better and better..
F- I think improving all the time is a really important thing. It sounds like an obvious thing to say.
B- I played with a band who last played [to Frank] what was it 2 or 3 years ago? I played with another band of mine, in like two years they were still as shit as they ever had been…
***- They just didn't care then?**
B- How can you not improve, you know? When I played with them the first time, their drummer was a lot better than me. When I played with them the second time he was just awful. I couldn't believe it, like…just ridiculous!
***- You also have a brilliant reputation as a live act. What is it about your live show that might justify that reputation? Is there something you may do differently than other bands?**
B- I don't know to be honest. We're not jumping around. A lot of bands do the synchronized jumps. A lot of bands swinging their guitars all over the place, we don't have to do that…I guess. We don't do that. We go for it with the music.
C- Honest! It's not a pretentious display, like posing and shit. But I think we're…
J- It's just effort!
F- Yeah, it's not a conscious thing. I think we're always taken that approach to what we do and if we're playing in front of other people we're gonna put a lot of energy in to it, you know?
***- [I proceeded to talk about the difference in a band's recorded material and their live sound, how energetic a band is and how much effort they have on stage.]**
F- The other thing to be said is there's something to it. You go to see someone like the Melvins play, who don't move. They stay exactly where the fuck they are and they're one of the most awesome live bands on the planet.
B- It's not about how much time they stand in one place.
J- Yeah!
F- It's because you look at them and you know how much they're putting into this and that's what matters so…

***- I always have arguments with people about shows. It doesn't matter if they fuck up here and there; as long as you can tell they're into the show. I haven't seen you guys yet, but we'll see in a little while.**

J- Shit! We have to be energetic now.

***- A few magazines have compared your band to Hundred Reasons. Do you feel that's a fair assessment?**

J- [Laughs] No!

F- I had some guy after our show last night pull me aside to where the equipment was on the side of the stage and he's like ["do you guys listen to Hundred Reasons?"] and right, I'm like "no!" ["did you see them"] I'm like "no, I haven't seen them yet" he's like ["oh..OK"] I'm like "yeah 'cause people always say that" ["yeah you know, you kind of sing a bit..."] and I'm like...

B- You know what it is? The fucking hair cut!

F- He seemed so happy, it was really good. I really enjoy it, but you know, just try and keep away from the Hundred Reasons whole kind of thing.

C- It's bullshit man! Everyone thinks we sound like...

***- You know the press is going to attach anything new to something successful like Hundred Reasons in the UK.**

F- I don't have a problem with the fact that the press is always going to hop on about something to a degree. The fact of the matter is, I honestly, honestly don't think we sound anything like Hundred Reasons. I don't particularly think my voice is that similar to Colin's [Hundred Reason's singer] voice at all.

C- Colin's tall and he's got the hair.

J- Tall, skinny guy...

C- I've only heard the one song of theirs, but it...

B- Structure-wise, we don't do the same shit! Guitar-wise we don't do the same shit! Rhythm section-wise it's not the same stuff going on! I don't understand where it comes from!

***- I've only heard two of your songs from videos, but I own Hundred Reasons' album and I don't think you sound like them at all. I don't think your voice [to Frank] sounds anything like Colin's and the song structure is totally different. But I think with the so-called post-hardcore scene huge in America and getting more popular in the UK, the press is going to attach you to what's popular and marketable.**

F- In the UK there's been a certain degree of success with it. Indigenously there's been Funeral For A Friend and Hundred Reasons. The thing that I...you know they obviously again ...people want to put you in the trends and that kind of thing. But the most rewarding thing I think we ever get is the comments some people come up with; under the impression we were going to be another Finch sound-alike band. Again, not to like or dislike or say anything at all about those kinds of bands, I just don't think we sound that much like them there's an element to it, you know? Me and Ben grew up listening to hardcore music, so to that extent, its post-hardcore because that...

B- It's a stupid fucking thing. The way I look at it, like sound wise, I always thought Fugazi was post-hardcore. The way all these bands sound, its to me like melodic hardcore. Like fucking pop music.

***- [I used emo as an example of how the media will attach any band to a style of music that may be profitable. I point out that the British media seems to be doing the same thing with Million Dead and post-hardcore.]**

F- You're in a band, you understand that the music media works in quite publicist ways. So they're gonna try and lop things together. So you'll probably spend all the time trying to be like it, that's how it is. I think in some ways, I'd like to think of it as a sort of roundabout compliment, in the sense that I do think that people do have some trouble fitting us in musically with scenes and terms. Which is a good thing. I don't want, particularly, to be sorted into any ditch or hole and I don't think we can avoid something that we don't want and I don't think we belong there. Hopefully the incoming groups...

C- Screamo!!!

F- That sound that they're taken a step further...

B- Extremo!!

C- Extremo bands what...

C- By the end of the day we're homo-core [laughs]. People use the word 'extremo' in effect for Funeral For A Friend who are a pretty poppy band, you know, which is fine but if like, you know, there was a time when you'd call something like I Hate Myself emo. And now extreme, which is more extreme than emo, is Funeral For A Friend. I'm worried about bands. Where are they going to go, what are they gonna be called next?

***- I saw Funeral For A Friend three weeks ago, when Million Dead was supposed to play!**

J- No, no, no! We weren't meant to play, we were never asked.

F- We got a load of emails from kids kinda going, "Fuck you! You were gonna play, then you couldn't be arsed to!"

***- Did you really? I thought you were playing, but at the show Matt from FFAF said there was a communication problem.**

J- There was! But it…see that's what keeps us out of it. There's all this bullshit that goes on. The agents don't communicate well with each other and the only reason we didn't get asked in the first place, as a support band, you can imagine our fee was miniscule and to come over to Ireland is quite expensive. I think our agents just assumed that we wouldn't be able to afford to do it, which we wouldn't have. So that's why…

***I thought it was weird that you would open that show and then come back what, three weeks later.**

J- Yeah, exactly! So it was just a fuck-up, we didn't know. We're here now!

***- How did the Belfast show go last night?**

B- It was alright.

F- We missed our flight. So we didn't actually get to Belfast until after the doors opened, so we didn't get a sound check. I think we played fine but it wasn't the greatest show in history because we were having major sound issues on stage, like no one could hear. It slightly blocks your ability to put everything into a show.

***- I take it; this is your first time in Dublin as a band?**

J- Yeah.

C- And individually for Frank…

J- Frank's never been here before.

***- What are your plans after the UK tour with Minus and Jarcrew?**

J- Hopefully we'll get to Japan in January or February because our album actually comes out on the 12th there which is really exciting. The plan is, the first six months next year, hopefully people get there shit together, you know. It's lots of touring; we want to get into Europe. Hopefully we'll get to go to South By Southwest.

***- Have you toured Europe yet?**

J- No! That's the thing, we want to get out and…

B- This is our first time out of the UK. This is the first time we've gotten everyone in order to get to do…

J- Yeah, so next year we just wanna tour you know. Get outside of the UK and then hopefully you know put out another release, something else.

***- Do you have any plans for America in regards to releases or tours?**

C- Hopefully!

J- They're working on it.

B- We're trying to sort something out with it.

***- Have you looked at labels there yet?**

F- Basically we want this album to come out everywhere. If we can get a label to like us…awesome, or if, off the back of this we can get signed to a label there for the next one, it would be sweet. No, but we definitely want to find one.

***- Do you plan on working with a small label or basically any label that would be distributed well?**

C- Well…

J- Wherever will do a good job.

C- It's completely just like, whatever is gonna be the best way of doing it. There's no kind of…

F- We, we have no funds from ourselves. We're not gonna be putting anything into it, putting it out in a foreign country. So it's gonna be up to a label that's big enough to be able to get some money into it.
C- And if we get a tour that they could put money up for us.
***- Thanks again for taking the time to talk with me.**

FREE/CHEAP MUSIC COMPILATIONS

AN ALTERNATIVE TO RADIO AND MUSIC TELEVISION

As the market becomes oversaturated with new punk/hardcore/indie bands, sifting through the mud to discover gold becomes more difficult. It has become a needle in the haystack scenario. Those around long enough will complain that all these new bands "suck". They will cling to their Rancids and Bad Religions. Not that those groups aren't great and still relevant, but they are denying a new generation an opportunity to shine.

If you look at underground music in fictional percentage terms, then the percentage of good/relevant bands only decreases (of course one's definition of good and relevant varies from person to person). It does not disappear. Let's say in 1990, prior to the Green Day/Offspring-led punk revival, that 57% of underground bands were good/relevant. Once the mainstream clinged to the likes of Nirvana, Smashing Pumpkins, and eventually punks like Green Day, then the market became overrun with new bands in these genres. So the early nineties saw the percentage of good/relevant underground music drop to, lets say 29%.

After the hype disintegrated and the mainstream embraced boy/girl teeny-pop and hip-hop again, the punk/hardcore/indie scene went back underground. When any music scene retreats from the mainstream it sheds its pretenders and cling-ons. So once again the percentage increases. You see, only those who truly love and understand the genre of music they play will stick with it through highs and lows. For them it is not a trend or a means for financial gain, it is their life. As they stick with it, they become better at it through tireless practicing and touring. Thus, the quality of bands improves.

As I stated earlier, with underground music out of the mainstream, the percentage increases again to lets say 39%. Now with a small increased interest in ska-punk bands in the late 1990's, I would say the percentages fluctuated slightly for a while, but not seriously. The mainstream never fully embraced ska-punk. Major record labels dipped in to try and make some money off it, however, mainstream radio nor MTV never caught on to it. The turn of the century saw punk, and eventually hardcore, push to the forefront once again.

Now the amount of bands pouring into the market is currently tremendous. So how do you weed out the garbage? Is MTV or the radio going to do this for you? Not likely! Radio stations and music television have allegiances to record companies. These companies pay to have their musicians covered regularly, thus building hype and increasing record sales. Most major radio stations and music venues (in America and soon the UK as well) are owned by Clear Channel. This monopolization is another story in itself. So the consumer can just have faith in the record company to sign only true talent, i.e. the good/relevant bands? Once again, it's not that easy. The priority of record companies is to make money off their acts. They want a performer who can create platinum records, whether the music is original or even good is irrelevant. Actually the history of major labels is to shun original bands for a 'proven' formula. The formula that is popular at that given moment. Whenever you get your 'groundbreaking' band that supposedly changes the current trend, you have to realize, it isn't a major label that discovered them. Most likely they've been around for awhile and there probably was at least one band before them that had a similar sound. Let's use both Nirvana and Green Day as parallel examples. Both bands had previously released independent records and built a steady and commendable fan base through relentless touring. These bans touted as original and fresh, were only so within the mainstream. Both groups followed the actual originators of their respective sounds. Bands that didn't receive any mainstream coverage. The Pixies had already been playing the soft-loud-soft form of music that Nirvana had become renowned for only a few years later. And Green Day owes, for the most part, their slacker punk sound to The Descendents, just to name but one.

Now I'm not trying to take anything away from either group. Both are excellent bands that surpassed the accomplishments of their predecessors. They took those influences and evolved them into their own sound. Today, Green Day has little resemblance to their early sound. I feel Nirvana would have evolved greatly as well had they still been around today. They certainly showed it through a mere three albums. Consumers have to learn not to trust the mainstream. Whether it is record companies or media (radio and television). So how do you find the good bands? As I stated earlier, they are definitely out there. Basically I attacked all your easy options, so unfortunately you have to work a little. Some media sources are worth your while, albeit independent ones. Zines such as Rockpile, Wonka Vision, AMP, and Law of Inertia are all excellent magazines. If you have any trouble finding the aforementioned 'zines, Alternative Press (A.P.) is a fine publication. For the Irish and UK readers, your bigger named rock 'zines like Kerrang, Rock Sound, and Big Cheese seem pretty reliable yet still concentrate on proven money-making artists. I don't know much about UK/Irish 'zines yet, but I

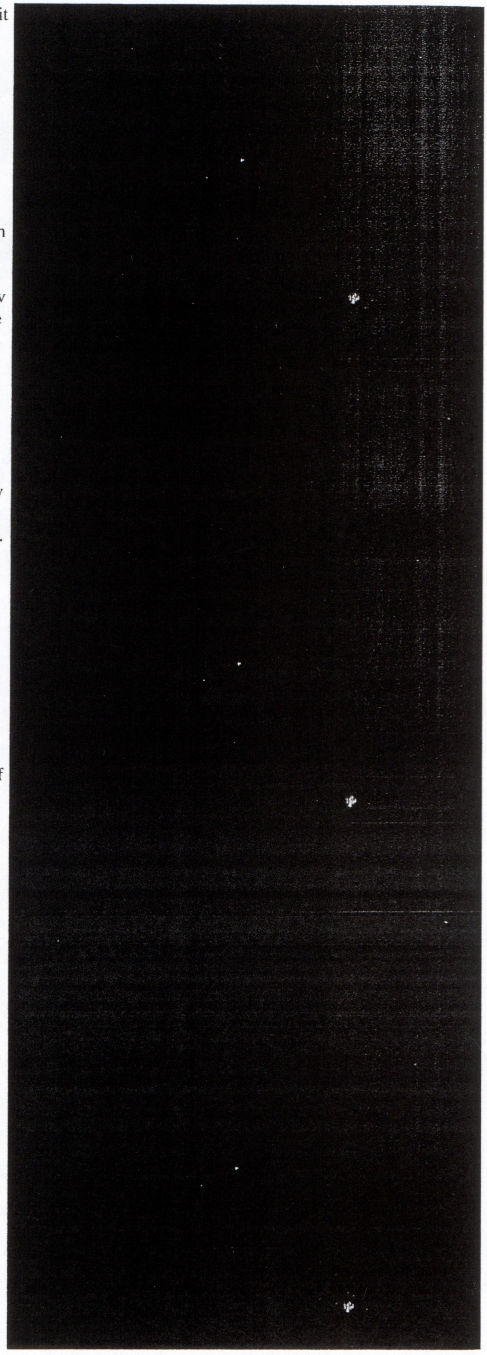
guarantee there are some good ones out there. When it comes to smaller 'zines, keep in mind they will most likely be very opinionated and possibly biased. So with these independent publications, the only way to judge is for yourself. Try them out and stick with the good ones. Just do yourself a favour and don't waste your pennies on Rolling Stone, Spin, or Blender magazines.

The other way for you to discover good bands is by the compilation CD. I don't mean some movie soundtrack or $14.99 (21.99euro) compilation. I mean free or extremely cheap compilations. The free/cheap comp is something that's been around with independent labels for years. It is a chance, in one low cost method, to have all their groups heard. Let's face it; between media, shows (which is another great forum for discovering bands, but can be pricey), and friends, it would be entirely too expensive to buy every album you heard was good.

My first cheap compilation was one from Nitro Records entitled 'Go Ahead Punk…Make My Day!' back in 1996. I purchased it for two reasons; the first being, I was big into the Offspring at the time and they had an unreleased track on it, but more importantly I was a broke high school student and it only cost $2.99. So why was this CD so great? You see, before this CD, I was relegated to more mainstream bands. My punk intake consisted of The Offspring, Green Day, Rancid, Bad Religion, The Clash and Nirvana (yes, they are a punk band!). With this compilation I ended up picking up a couple Vandals albums and instantly became obsessed with AFI. It finally dawned on me that major labels weren't the only labels out there releasing good music.

As I began attending smaller punk shows, I started receiving free comps. I found a whole new brethren of great bands from these discs. With countless bands and labels out there, the compilations are now all over the place. Also with the online music sharing, many labels have to compete by giving away compilations for free to have their bands heard. Who wants to dish out their hard-earned money to hear new music, when they can download an mp3 for very little money if not free.

Do yourself a favour; next time a free comp falls out of a magazine you bought or you are handed a few at the Warped Tour, don't play Frisbee with it. I don't care how tempting it is to fling it at the rubbish band that is playing before Thrice, take it home and listen to it. You may just hear your next favourite band. It takes a little work and listening to countless horrible songs, but trust me, it's worth it when you get a diamond.



THE HOPE CONSPIRACY

I set out to interview The Hope Conspiracy after their Dublin show on November 19th. I conducted a short interview with vocalist Kevin and bassist Jonas in Whelan's that night. I didn't realize until the next day, when I went to listen to the interview, that the tape was blank. I attempted to figure out what went wrong. I then gave up, realizing you can't rationalize stupidity. After a few pints throughout the night, perhaps I became careless and didn't press the record button all the way down. Maybe in my excitement to interview such an amazing band, I forgot to check the volume level. Or possibly when that kid elbowed me in the head tonight, he killed a few too many brain cells and I completely forgot to turn on the recorder. No, I'm almost positive I at least pushed one of the buttons. At the end of the interview, I pushed the stop button and it clicked. Anyway, the point is, I screwed it up bad. So I will attempt to relay the guy's answers to the best of my dodgy memory. I apologize if you don't get the detailed interview that should have been included. If it makes you feel better the interview was extremely short and was interrupted numerous times. Therefore, the guys didn't have an opportunity to elaborate much on my horrible and boring questions.

Kevin began by giving me the names of the current band members. Jonas plays bass, Jimmy the guitar, Jarrod pounds the drums and Kevin himself is the vocalist. I asked how this group came together in Boston. Kevin explained that Jonas, the original drummer (Adam) and guitarist (Dan) dissolved their first band (Harvest) and moved to Boston where they found him to take vocal duties in 1999. Since then the band has gone through a few line-up changes on drums and guitar. Most recently acquiring Jimmy to play guitar.

I was curious to hear what Kevin thought was the progress made from the band's first full-length album, 'Cold Blue', to the current LP, 'Endnote'. He felt it was "a natural progression". He emphasized that there were no drastic changes in their sound. The band was just fine-tuning their sound. Basically becoming more refined and tighter as a collective whole.

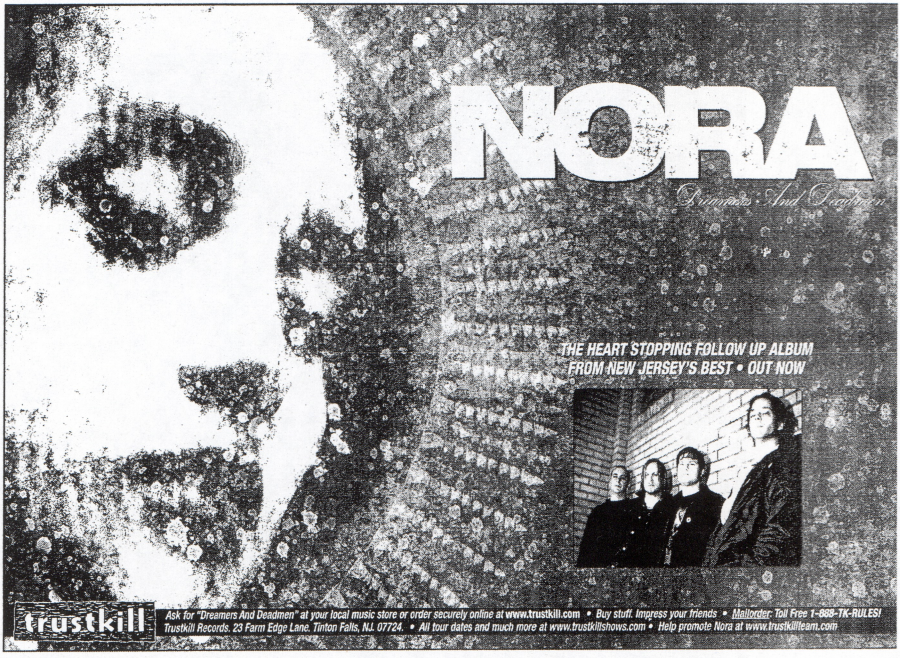
THC had a line-up change on the drum kit following the tragic events of September 11th 2001. I asked for a short explanation of these circumstances. At this point Jonas entered the room and Kevin asked him to field this question. Jonas said it was simply a case of someone standing up for his beliefs. Original drummer Adam had always been extremely patriotic. When 9/11 happened he was sickened, as we all were, by the devastation. Adam felt it was his duty as an American to do something about it. After given the thought a lot of consideration, he informed the band that he was quitting to enlist in the US Army. Jonas explained that Adam had the choice between the band and defending his country. Adam felt it was more important to fight for his nation at his difficult time. When Jonas explained this he seemed a bit bewildered at a band member choosing anything over the group. He quickly commented that the reasons for Adam leaving were admirable and not because of band problems or "something stupid, like college (he said this jokingly)". I enquired if they still had contact with Adam. Jonas said they did and he was doing great. They said he is

back in America now after spending some time in Iraq as well as other locations that he couldn't disclose since he is part of the elite Army Rangers.

I turned the conversation to their recent tour of Australia and New Zealand. They stated how great all of the shows were and that their only bad experience was with United Airlines. Jonas went on about the poor service, food, legroom, etc,..that this airline had as well as cancelling one of their flights and placing them on another "shitty United flight" that made them a day late in arriving. I guess it can't be all that bad if the airline was their only gripe. They absolutely loved playing all of the especially in Australia.

I enquired if this was the band's first time in Ireland, which it was. I also asked how the Belfast gig went the previous night. They thought it was great with the crowd really into the show, which in turn made them perform even better. I was tempted to ask how they viewed tonight's show but I already knew the answer. Everything they said the crowd did in Belfast; sing-along, getting on stage, circle pits, just moving in general, was absent from the ill-attended Dublin show. I didn't want to put the band in the position to either criticize their Dublin fans or try and sugarcoat their views on the show. Perhaps I am wrong, and they truly enjoyed the show. My personal feeling would be against that statement and I chose to skip the Dublin question and ask my final question.

What are THC's near-future plans? Kevin stated that after they complete the European tour, that the band will head home and begin writing and recording the next album this winter. The album will be out again on Equal Vision Records. I asked when fans could expect the release date. Kevin said he would like to have it out in the spring or early summer, hopefully. I am already looking forward to the next album after the brilliant 'Endnote' record. I thanked Kevin and Jonas for participating in this shoddy interview and also thanked them for taking the time and risk, that most American punk/hardcore groups don't, in playing Ireland.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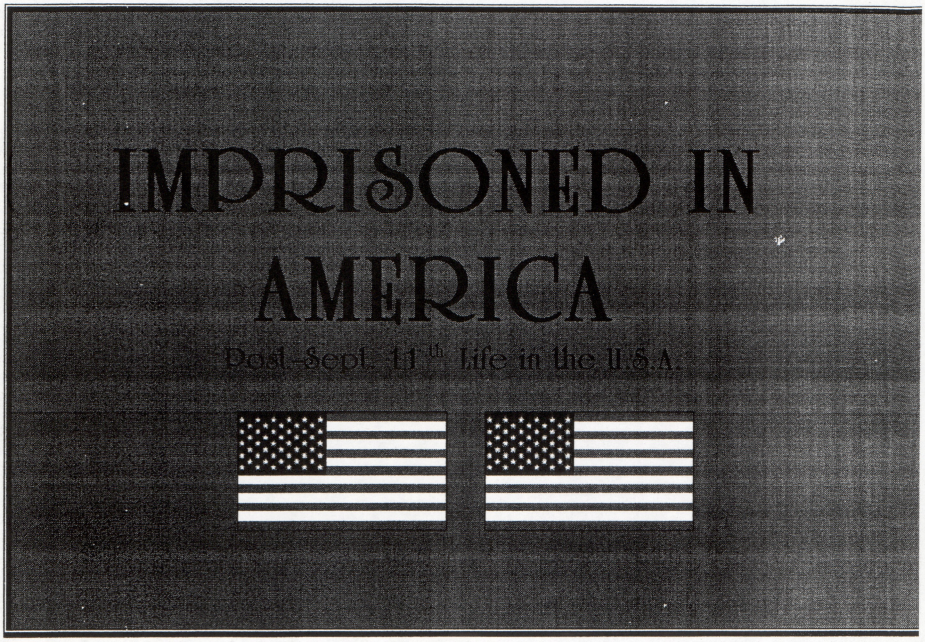


The United States of America is a frightening place to reside these days. Not because of any terrorist threats from radical organizations though. It is because of the public opinion force-fed by the narrow-minded media and the ultra conservative government. Living in New Jersey almost my entire life, the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center, hit close to home. I didn't lose any friends or loved ones thank goodness, but many communities in New Jersey did. Therefore, I witnessed first-hand the reaction to those events and the resulting attitudes in the past two years.

What were the goals of the 9/11 terrorists? One was obviously to cause as much damage, both financially, and governmental. They were also looking to inflict as many casualties as possible. They had a more important objective with those attacks though. Something that the American public is aware of, but still continue to accommodate the terrorists to this very day. Experts and those linked to Al-Qaeda have admitted the most important goal in regards to those attacks, was to strike fear into the American people and government. This is exactly what they accomplished. The U.S. was attacked on its home soil; something no one, myself included, ever thought would happen.

When growing up in the U.S.A. you gain a sense of invulnerability from foreign threats. The media, education system and your parents all instil in you something called "American Pride"; a conceited form of patriotism that deprives everyone of global truths. Americans don't care about other nations and their problems. In the education we receive, whether from school or the media, we never learn about other countries unless we were involved in a war or 'campaign' with them. What we never here is that we are more involved with other nations than most realize.

No one cares that current public enemies Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein would never have the effectiveness or power if it were not for the aid of the U.S. Government. America needs to get its priorities straight and not just throw its weight behind any lunatic that opposes the Government's current number one enemy. During the 1980's, America trained and armed the Taliban regiment to battle the Soviet Union. Now that the U.S. struck Afghanistan and removed those same Taliban from power, they are backing various Afghan Warlords to take control of the new 'puppet' government. These warlords, including Mohammad Atta and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, have a long history of treachery. A few of these atrocities include rape, murder, torture, and theft. Currently Afghan politicians have been working to set-up a democratic government that includes the main warlords as well as well respected Kabul politicians. The various warlords, however, are a constant threat to disrupt these proceedings due to a failure to disarm their on-going criminal activity. A few years down the line are we going to have to remove another government we once aided and armed.

So we toppled the Taliban but failed to capture public enemy number one, Bin Laden. President Bush needs to refocus the people's attention away from his dismal domestic record. What the media fails to regularly report on is that he entered his term with the strongest economy in U.S. history and managed to turn every single economic category downward. He also managed to bankrupt the U.S. Treasury, sign more laws and executive orders amending or ignoring the Constitution than any president in history, he dissolved more international treaties than any president in U.S. history, and appointed more convicted criminals to administration than any other president. He also presided over the highest gasoline prices in U.S. history and refused to use national reserves. In his first year in office over 2-million Americans lost their jobs. President Bush also cut health care benefits for war veterans and supports a cut in duty benefits for active duty troops and their families. He set the all-time record for most people worldwide to simultaneously protest him in public venues (15 million people) shattering the record for protest against any person in the history of mankind.

After his failure to capture Bin Laden, President Bush turned his attention to an already existing public enemy, Saddam Hussein. He was an easy sell to the American people. To be sure though, he led everyone on to believe that Bin Laden and Hussein were linked through terrorism. This was obviously a lie. Bin Laden's Al Qaeda, are enemies with Hussein. Bin Laden has been openly critical, throughout the years of Hussein and his Sunni Government. Why now, would they link themselves? If Al-Qaeda has any ties to Iraq, it would be with the Shi'ite Party, not Hussein's Sunni regime. Unfortunately, the general U.S. public believed it. I feel if President Bush declared that Santa Claus was working with Bin Laden, that we would see mass Christmas paraphernalia burnings across the U.S. With a majority of the American public supporting another war on Iraq, queue Operation Enduring Freedom.

President Bush used the fear from September 11th as an excuse to keep his popularity up. He knew an easy and quick victory would keep his name atop the polls. Keep in mind there is a 2004 presidential election. Actually I shouldn't say, "he knew", I should say his advisors informed him. They also made sure his war would distract everyone from the aforementioned domestic problems.

When September 11th occurred, I was shocked and angered as were everyone I knew. I supported the war on the Taliban regime. Terrorists training camps needed to be destroyed, Bin Laden needed to be dealt with and most of all the citizens of Afghanistan needed to be rid of an oppressive government. The U.S. Government used the excuse of liberating the Afghan people to embark on the Bin Laden hunt. That was fine with me, as long as there was a positive outcome from the operation. The U.S. promised to help rebuild Afghanistan as well as continue to supply food to the starving civilians during this period. What the U.S. did was start-giving contracts to Bush's friends and campaign monetary supporters. Meanwhile supplies were cut back drastically only months after the Taliban were toppled. leaving many civilians starving and in need of medical supplies.

The UNOCAL Corporation has been in talks with the Taliban regime since late in Ronald Reagan's Presidential term, to build a trans-Asian oil pipeline that would cross Afghanistan. The talks were said to have collapsed in 1998 during President Clinton's term. The negotiations for this CentGas deal were said to have commenced prior to entering Afghanistan. One of the first things accomplished by the Bush Administration after toppling the Taliban Regime and installing a 'puppet' regime in Kabul, was to begin construction on this pipeline. Current Vice President Dick Cheney was CEO of Halliburton a huge oil pipeline construction firm that will benefit immensely by this deal. In fact, the rebuilding and peacekeeping we claimed we would conduct in Afghanistan is being conducted primarily by European troops, not American. Didn't Bush claim our troops will remain in Afghanistan for "the long haul"? Yes, he did, and they will. They are currently guarding the pipeline construction and personnel. After all, who cares about Afghanistan now, right? We have bigger fish to fry, in Iraq and Saddam Hussein!

When the Iraq situation came up, I got a bad feeling about what I was hearing. There was no logical reason for war. Iraq posed no immediate threat to the USA. There was little proof of any weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Why don't we send troops to North Korea? They openly defy us and previously signed international arms treaties by admitting to nuclear testing. What really angered me was that the UN, our own creation more or less, was ignored by President Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair. They went above International Law and openly became the aggressors. Not one nation supported the War on Iraq aside from the United Kingdom's Labour Party. The British public even denounced the war in large numbers; however, their government ignored public demand and cow-tailed to the U.S. Government. If you are thinking that nations, like Poland, supported war because of their military presence in Iraq, you're wrong. The U.S. bribed certain nations into helping us with either troops, or the use of land and airspace. Poland, as an example, was told we would be moving many of the U.S. Military facilities from Germany to Poland. This brings their government much-needed funds from our military. The U.S. reported that the only reason they are making the switch is because it will be cheaper to relocate to Poland. The U.S. made similar deals with other countries whose aid we required, such as Turkey and Iran. So why is the U.S.A. the only nation smart enough to see what is going on in Iraq? All these other nations must be weak or misinformed?

That leads us back to 'American Pride'. No one wants to defy or question his or her government. Therefore, all these other nations such as Germany and Russia must be incorrect and in tough-guy American eyes, weak! Saddam Hussein is a problem. Iraqi's probably would be better off with out him in power, but that does not make Bush's

actions appropriate. Hussein should have been removed after the Gulf War in 1991. Instead Bush Sr failed to finish the job he began by sending U.S. troops to liberate Kuwait.

Former President Clinton also failed to handle the situation affectively. Heavy sanctions and "strategic" bombings accomplished absolutely nothing, other then starving and killing thousands of innocent civilians. Some would cite these past failures by U.S. Presidents, as giving Bush Jr just cause in his attempt to end the charades in Iraq. Perhaps if these were his real reasons, this war might be a little easier to swallow. If the welfare of Iraqi civilians and possibly U.S. civilians (in case Hussein attacked America with those mystery WMD) were really at the top of Bush's list, than so many people across the globe probably would not be objecting so vehemently.

What Bush saw after September 11th was 'American Pride', unlike any patriotism in recent U.S. history. Every car and home had American flags or stickers adorned to them. It was breathtaking, it was refreshing to see everyone pull together and pay tribute to the victims of September 11th and support our great nation. I for one joined in and had the stickers on my car. It showed that maybe Americans were not as selfish and thoughtless as I thought we were. Unfortunately, there was one man who is more selfish and thoughtless than any American, and he set out to exploit this patriotism for his own benefits.

George W Bush used the fear within the U.S. community to gain support for his War on Terrorism. I am glad terrorism was being taken more seriously. I believe it was Bush's duty to embark on a war on terror. Bush, however, crossed the line. He used his War on Terrorism to shield his dismal domestic record and moneymaking ventures for himself and friends. There was no definitive proof of collusion between Al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein as Bush claimed. International weapons inspectors found nothing to show Iraq was still producing weapons of mass destruction. The most relevant item found were empty containers that at one time contained biological weapons. The inspectors even stated in their report that they were not used in quite some time. More evidence given by Secretary of State Colin Powell was aerial photos of evacuations of sites prior to the arrival of weapons inspectors. Definitely suspicious, but not the "smoking gun" Bush insisted that they would find. The U.S. has yet to find any proof of these WMD. And we can't forget those sixteen little words either.

During the President's State of the Union Address, he stated, "The British Government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa". Not until after the War in Iraq 'officially' ended did the British Government admit that it could not verify that claim. Another words, the President of the U.S.A. in his most important public address of the year, and probably his term in office, flat-out lied to the nation in order to sell the impending war. If it was a mistake, like claimed, why wasn't it publicly corrected earlier? Why wait months later when the war finally ended? Former President Clinton received more negative press for lying about his personal life! Bush's statement affected multiple nations and their citizens unlike Clinton's lie.

Everyone knows the real reasons for Operation Enduring Freedom. I already discussed the distraction and popularity tactics of President Bush. The more common and oft talked about reason among dissenters is, oil. President Bush has successfully been able to blind the public by leaving the oil profits to the new Iraqi government. So the U.S. has no stakes in Iraqi oil then, right? Wrong! With a new government that will be an ally, America can strike better deals to import Iraqi oil at cheap rates.

That is not the only stake the current Presidential Administration has in Iraqi oil. As an example, current National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice was a director for Chevron and recently they named an oil tanker after her. President Bush and many in his administration have their hands in powerful oil companies. The majority of Bush's campaign funds originate from oil companies or other corporations that have an interest in foreign contracts such as technology and communication fields. These companies played a huge role in Bush's election 'victory'. Now when it comes time to reward companies with overseas contracts to rebuild Iraq, who do you think will get them? Vice President Dick Cheney who as I stated before was CEO of Halliburton. This corporation currently has over $7 billion in contracts to rebuild Iraq.

As a public what can U.S. citizens do to counter such corrupt government officials and figureheads? They need to swallow their 'American Pride' and demand proper conduct from their elected officials. In the current state of the U.S., I feel this will not happen anytime soon. In today's America, especially in the New York/New Jersey area it is taboo to criticize the Government. It reminds me of sports fans. I'll use ice hockey as an example. Player A from the Maple Leafs uses his stick to crosscheck player B from the Senators in the back when he isn't looking, sending him head-first into the boards. The fans of both teams begin arguing the penalty call while watching the game in a bar. Upon review from television's instant replay, player A obviously committed the penalty. The Maple Leaf fans (in most cases) continue to put up a heated argument. It is as if they don't want to let down their team or its players. When have you ever, in any sport, heard a fan admit to having a 'dirty' player (takes cheap shots or plays excessively violent) on their team? It is a rarity if they do. They will almost always defend the player of such accusations.

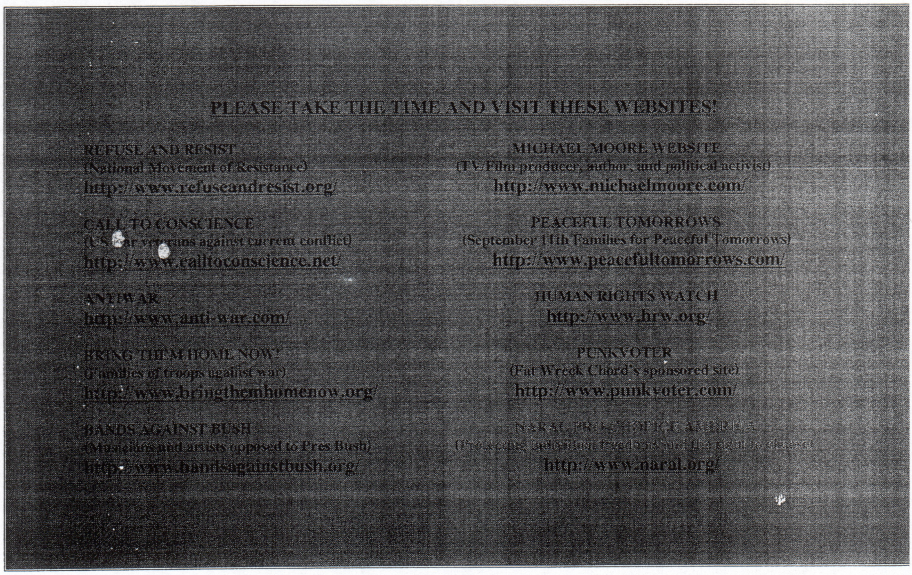
For me, Americans are the fans supporting their government no matter what occurs. I have recently been in political discussions with co-workers and friends. The malicious scorn I receive for my anti-Bush views are incredible. Some of them asked me, "If you hate your country so much, why don't you leave"? They are so narrow-minded, not to differentiate between, not supporting the current government and not supporting my country. They fail to understand that part of a democracy is the dissenting opinion, the freedom to have any opinion you like. It is a

citizen's duty within a democracy to question the government. To be sure it is representing the people (which is its primary job) to the best of its ability.

Some of my aforementioned co-workers also have called me "a Commie" (what does Communism have to do with this discussion?) or a "peace-loving hippie". The 'Commie' comments are just sheer ignorance; and yes, I do love peace, I am not ashamed of that! I understand war and death is necessary in governing a country at one point or another. Unnecessary war is anything but essential and should always be avoided or questioned. I have also heard comments about our troops placing their lives on the line for my own. I want to make one thing clear; I do not disapprove or fault U.S. troops for this war. They are soldiers doing their jobs. I support our troops 100% and it sickens me to see on a daily basis more of them are slaughtered almost six months after the 'official' end of the war. I understand there will be always be casualties after a conflict, especially in a troubled anti-American region. It is absolutely ridiculous to see more U.S. troops killed after the war then during. At the time of this writing (Dec'03), the figures have reached 258 fatalities since the 'official' end of the war, compared to 171 during the war.

The U.S. public has to realize they are a democracy. Their voice is meant to govern, not the wallets of rich oil tycoons. If the public does not speak for themselves, then who will? Now is not the time to be passive. President Bush and his henchmen have made the U.S.A. the laughing stock of the world. Before President Bush took office, every foreigner I met, home or abroad, loved America and went out of their way to accommodate me. Now I get disdain and a bombardment of Bush questions. I am sick of defending myself for being American!

Why should an American care about the rest of the world? The U.S. is the most powerful nation on Earth; we don't need other's support. The fact is, I care. We are part of a global community. Just think of how Americans viewed the Soviets during the Cold War. That's the way other nations view us now. It is just as close-minded and ignorant as all the criticism I receive from Americans for speaking out against Bush. They, however, have a better base for their prejudice than the 'American Pride' warriors back home. Keep in mind, why we are in our current wars in Iraq and on terrorism, because these people have anti-American views. This is why Al-Qaeda attacked us on September 11th. The only thing President Bush is doing is making more enemies across the globe, which opens the U.S. to further threats. Americans need to open their eyes and realize the difference since September 11th. They need to want a change, to stop living in constant fear, day-in and day-out. Most of all, they need to halt the government's exploitation of their fear. Live your life like you once did. You're letting the terrorist win by allowing Bush to ruin our nation. The government needs to be refocused on the domestic problems. These are what affect my everyday life. My job, house, family, and health are more of a concern to me than worrying if some lunatic with a bomb might kill me. I do not want to wallow in a dead-end job with no money, trying to feed starving children in a dilapidated home while worrying that my kids may need medical attention that I can't afford without healthcare!



FLOGGING MOLLY

I was able to sit and chat with Flogging Molly front man and native Dubliner (Ring's End), Dave King, after his band's triumphant return to Ireland. The show (Dec 13th) was the group's second time in Dublin after their debut appearance on May 16th of 2003. The interview was short since I didn't wish to keep Dave from socializing with his old mates here in Dublin. Also I decided to approach this interview with no prepared questions since I have spoken with Dave in the past, and knew the interview would lean more towards a conversation then question and answer session. Let me take this time to once again thank Dave for the interview. It was apparent he had plenty of other things to take care of on this particular night. It shows the type of person he is to place everything on hold, including friends he rarely sees, to talk with me. Thanks again Dave!

***- When exactly did you leave Ireland and precisely why?**
D- Well, I left on a couple of occasions. First of all, when I was about 19 I moved to London to join a band and four years later moved back to Dublin. I lived there with me wife and my son and then I moved to America.
***- Is there a reason you moved to America?**
D- Yeah, well basically my marriage had, uh, dissolved and I had an opportunity to go to America and maybe make a new life. I went there and…[long pause]
***- Change of scenery, basically?**
D- Yeah! I mean, uh, I didn't feel very confident about my position in Ireland. I didn't feel very, I didn't feel very positive. So when I went to America, the situation I went to turned out to be negative, but I stayed there because…I don't know. Something said to me 'I need to be on my own and I need to discover a couple of things about myself'.
***- It's well known how the band started in Molly Malone's in LA. Did you ever honestly think, in any sense, that this would become full-time or to the scale that it has become?**
D- Well, it started out meeting people, enjoying being with those people and just turning out the way it did.
[At this point the interview was interrupted by friends and well-wishers who came in to chat with Dave. The interview continued after a short amount of time.]
***- What are your views on the American punk scene embracing so many bands lately that heavily incorporate Irish or Celtic music into their sound?**
D- I used to talk to Ken from the Dropkick's [Dropkick Murphy's] and I don't think they had any notion of that we were doing what we were doing. We had no idea what they were doing. I think there is a big, you know, coincidence there in doing what we're doing and I think we also come from different angles as well. I think we're more folk and they're more punk. I think also, you say Irish music; probably the last thing we seem is an Irish band. We're people from all over the place. We have opinions about beliefs and disbeliefs. I mean, I don't live in Ireland anymore, not that I won't again but I don't live in Ireland right now and there's a reason for everything. It took me to move from Ireland to really…[the end of Dave's sentence becomes drown out by background noise]
***- The band's first time playing in Ireland was this past May in Whelan's, correct?**
D- Yup!
***- How did you like the reaction at that show?**
D- It was unbelievable! Even tonight was like…it was unbelievable!
***- Is there a reason you didn't play Whelan's again? Or was it a progressive move to a larger venue?**
D- I'll play anywhere!
***- Was it just a progressive move to a larger venue?**
D- The atmosphere of the crowd in Dublin is something that I could never expect. It's a wonderful, uh, warmth with the crowd, you know? I think it's the type of band we are too. We're just, you know people, we're a people band.
***- That leads right into my next question. This is the fifth time I've seen you and the atmosphere you guys have with the crowd is amazing. Is there anything special you try to do, or is it something that is just a response to what you naturally do on stage each night?**
D- I think when you write songs, for me personally, are very personal, you're getting something out. So when you get to the live situation, you've already gotten it out. You can, in some ways, relax a lot. You know, it's like a celebration. This is now. The 'lets get together and sing and dance and celebrate life'. Yeah, there's a lot that alleviates from live shows. The writing process is much more harrowing than the live situation. I go through several demons to create songs and when it comes to the live show it's like 'you know what, I got over that, I can get over this'.
***- So, your writing process is for yourself. To release your…**
D- For yourself! Nobody else!
***- Alright, one more question and I'll let you hang out with your friends. What is Flogging Molly's immediate future? Do you have…**
D- Today! That's our future. Today!
***- See how things go?**
D- Exactly!

AFI
Sing The Sorrow

Holy Shit! You can deem AFI "sell-outs" if you like, but this album is brilliant! AFI have already recorded 2 near-perfect albums in 'The Art Of Drowning' and 'Black Sails In The Sunset', but they outdid themselves this time. In my mind without the major label luxuries of time and money this album would have fallen into the 'near-perfect' category as well. The first single, 'Girls Not Grey' is very polished with 80's hair-metal riffs and AFI's trademark sing-alongs.

'Silver And Cold' has beautifully lush chorus build-ups. 'Death Of Seasons' rivals any so-called post-hardcore song. This track manages to have that raw punk urgency while instituting some pro-tools effects and samples. Davey's voice scratches and growls with random beauty. No track on this CD is even mediocre. Every one stands tall! This is an extremely close second (to Thrice) for the album of the year.

Against Me!
As The Eternal Cowboy

Fat Wreck debut from Florida 'it'-band of the moment. Against Me craft some great folk-punk songs. Lyrically, you're looking some songs on par with Billy Bragg and Woody Guthrie. That southern political folk was apparent on the band's last LP 'Reinventing Axl Rose' (I've yet to hear their debut 12", however, it fetches hefty sums on eBay. You can also purchase the LP from the band for $200 with the cash going to charity). On some of the more upstart tracks you will instantly identify a worker's influenced street punk, very similar to early Dropkick Murphy's and Swingin' Utters. This is definitely an intelligent album that every so-called 'punk' today should be forced to intake regularly.

Alkaline Trio
Good Mourning

Exactly what you'd expect from Chicago's finest. That's not a bad thing either. Every album from Alkaline Trio has followed their dark-catchy punk blueprint. With each release, however, the songs mature slightly and become tighter. Just check out some of the great tracks on this CD such as 'This Could Be Love', 'All On Black' and 'Continental'. The difference between Matt Skiba and Dan Andriano penned songs have become more obvious on this release, with Dan's tracks airing a more positive and less dark contrast to them.

Ann Beretta
Three Chord Revolution

The Virginia punks are back with a new full-length. Ann Beretta have always taken a straight-ahead, early Clash approach to their punk songs. They have managed to crank out some excellent releases over recent years including a great acoustic and live album. This CD may take some time with me though. Some tracks have a little too much of a poppy feel to them, especially 'Not Invited'. There still are brilliant songs here though, such as 'Lipstick And Makeup' and 'Angry All The Time'. If you're a fan of straight-ahead three chord classic punk tunes, you will like this record. I'll keep listening to this CD, I'm sure it will most likely grow on me. I love all of their other releases.

Berkeley
Hopes, Prayers And Bubblegum

This is an excellent indie-rock band from Co. Donegal here in Ireland. Some how they managed to record this debut album in Chicago under the helm of legendary rock producer Steve Albini. The music is quite diverse, recalling everything from The Pixies to Matchbox 20 and Toad The Wet Sprocket to Pavement. The sound is unmistakably an American rock sound with singer Tommy McLaughlin's voice sounding eerily similar to the Counting Crow's Adam Duritz. These lads are worth a listen.

Boy Sets Fire
Tomorrow Comes Today

Perhaps the songs on the warm-up EP 'Live For Today' gave me high expectations, but I'm a little disappointed with thi release. The songs that appear o the aforementioned EP are probably the best aside from excellent tracks 'Eviction Articl 'High Wire Escape Artist' and 'White Wedding Dress'.

This leaves you wondering what happened on the other half of this record. Not that the CD i bad, its still a good album, just r up to BSF potential in my mind. Perhaps the perfection of 'After The Eulogy' just raised my expectations too high.

Brand New
Your Favorite Weapon

The hype machine loves these Long Island hopefuls, I can't imagine why though, after hearing this CD. Unlike other L bands Glassjaw, The Movielife, and From Autumn To Ashes, th band has nothing original or exciting about them. Generic, describes this band to the tee. Generic post-hardcore riffs, generic pop-punk vocals and generic emo backing vocals. Oh and the lyrics...they're not generic, they just suck!

Coheed & Cambria
In Keeping Secrets Of Silent Earth: 3

This is the next instalment of Coheed & Cambria's punk proj rock opera. Not far off from 'Tl Second Stage Turbine Blade'. It definitely more grandiose thoug There are more instrumental build-ups and intermission orchestration on this release. Th songs are very similar with Claudio's high-pitched voice a distinctive as ever. One noticeat difference though, is the drumming. They come off as more primitive and hard-hitting A very nice adjustment in my mind. The guitars are better tha ever. Not entirely different, jus more beefy and defined. This is great storytelling concept record can't wait for the next one!

Copeland
Beneath Medicine Tree

This is an amazingly beautiful record. I picked it up at a friend's recommendation. I expected something more along hardcore lines. This is a pleasant surprise. Soft yet very powerful and not trying to ride the post-hardcore coattails thankfully. Opening track 'Brightest' is a sullen piano ballad. It is an odd but welcome choice for a starter. I recommend this CD for fans of indie rock and in particular Jimmy Eat World, The Get Up Kids, Eliot Smith, or Coldplay.

The Crush
Here Is Where I Cross My Fingers

It took me a few listens of this CD to appreciate it. If appreciate means not taking the disc out of my stereo for weeks. There is nothing original or groundbreaking here, just one hell of a solid well-written punk album from the Minneapolis crew. Scraggly vocals like Rancid yet emotional lyrics in vein of any so-called 'emo' group such as The Get Up Kids. My only complaint is occasionally the lyrics are a little flat or poorly written. [The band were recently forced to change their moniker to The Fast Luck. A month after, however, the group called it quits all together. RIP]

Dashboard Confessional
A Brand, A Mission, A Mark, A Scar

Chris Carrabba should have committed suicide by now, or at least gone gay. Perhaps men wouldn't break his heart as much as women have seemed to have. This album is more rocking, more poppy, and more irritating than any other DC release. Chris should jut stick to the acoustic shit.

Denali
The Instinct

The Richmond, VA crew is back for LP number two. This album lets vocalist Maura Davis stretch her vocal talents even more so than on their debut album. On that CD her voice was along the lines of Beth Gibbons from Portishead. This record lets her develop a more unique style of her own. It helps that the band toned down their trip-hop sound that overshadowed the first release. Not that it was bad, far from it, it's just nice to see them progress their sound from one record to the next. This is a great album to pick up.

The Distillers
Coral Fang

For the Distillers third record and major label debut, Brody and company have taken the excellent song-writing exposed on the last LP, 'Sing Sing Death House' and combined it with the raw intensity of their self-titled debut record to create a great punk rock album. Nothing new, nothing groundbreaking, just a good album worth your heard earned cash.

The Dropkick Murphy's
Blackout

Not quite as good as 'Sing Loud, Sing Proud' but still an excellent release. The Woody Guthrie penned 'Gonna Be A Blackout Tonight' is tremendous and sounds right at home along side the other DM tracks. The boys have once again seamlessly melded Irish folk with street punk. And is it me or is bassist Ken Casey itching to be hard more vocally?

The Explosion
Sick Of Modern Art (EP)

Another perfect punk release from Boston's The Explosion. Though only 5 songs, this EP kicks ass like any other Explosion record. It just kicks you quicker than the full-length albums. If you haven't heard The Explosion yet, and are a fan of aggressive punk with no pop included, than you'll love this band. This EP is a perfect introduction sampler to your new favourite band.

From Autumn To Ashes
The Fiction We Live

Definitely not as punishing as their debut, 'Too Bad You're Beautiful'. It takes a more melodic approach. In fact every other song seems to be slowed-down with more melody, giving drummer Fran more vocal opportunities. The structure take away a little fluency but gives each song more character individually. It's easier to remember each song for what it is. This album is a balance between rage and resent. A gooc mature sophomore effort from th Long Island guys.

Funeral For A Friend
Casually Dressed And Deep In Conversation

A ridiculous amount of press an media has been placed on this band in the UK. Seen by some British as the saviours of rock music in the UK (I heard that about The Darkness as well, not too long ago). Unfortunately eac year a new band earns this hype Surprisingly though, I feel FFAI live up to their hype. I still don' believe, that much attention should be placed on any new young band though. It most likel will ruin most bands in that situation. FFAF have a fresh sound. Most clump them in as another post-hardcore Finch sound-alike. They have more to them than that however. They manage to play a happy mediun of early 80's metal (AC/DC, Iro Maiden) and late 80's hair meta (Poison, Guns 'N' Roses). On to of this they sprinkle some brutal hardcore (Black Flag, Madball) riffs and modern American post hardcore (Glassjaw, Finch) arrangements and vocals. Confusing? Not really, just tougl to explain. The early 80's metal and hardcore guitars give it that raw driving force; while the hai metal influences and vocals giv the record a more accessible mainstream feel.

Further Seems Forever
How To Start A Fire

Yes, everyone knows this is Chris Carrabba's (of Dashboard Confessional fame) former group So new front man Jason Gleeson (formerly of Affinity) has some high expectations to meet from fans. Well, let me make this clear

Jason should have been fronting this band from its inception. He is hands down a superior lyricist than Carrabba and fits the overall FSF sound better. This album is great! Not as complex as the debut, but its simplicity is its charm. Even the band sounds more comfortable not trying to sound bigger than they are.

Give Up The Ghost
We're Down Til We're Underground

About two years ago everyone was hailing this Boston hardcore outfit (formerly American Nightmare) as the most fresh and original h/c outfit in recent memory. Any new hardcore bands to come along were accused of robbing GUTG's sound. I felt these accusations were a tad harsh. GUTG are an excellent group, saviours they are not though. After all the well-documented hoopla surrounding this band's legal woes and subsequent name change, they finally drop their new record on Equal Vision Records. This is thirty minutes of true hardcore. To me, Boston is unparalleled when it comes to straight-ahead hardcore acts at the moment; GUTG, The Hope Conspiracy, and Unearth to name a few. This album isn't going to shift the balance of the planet, but it is a powerful listen. The band had plenty of time to hone their chops for this recording while they sorted out their legal problem. It shows, as it is much tighter and well focused than their previous releases.

Homesick For Space
Unison

Definitely a more rounded and better polished album than their debut EP on Immigrant Sun Records. I have to say, I really love the dark soundscapes the piano paints on this album. This CD is moody, beautiful, dark, soothing and fresh. One of the most original bands I've heard in ages!

The Lawrence Arms
The Greatest Story Ever Told

Chicago's Lawrence Arms follow up their brilliant Fat Wreck debut, 'Apathy And Exhaustion' with another dual-vocal Fat release. This is very similar to the aforementioned 'Apathy…' record. That CD took a few listens to sink in and I feel this one will take some time as well. It has the same sound as previous releases with possibly a darker edge like their drinking buddies, Alkaline Trio use. If you are already a fan, this album won't chase you away.

Million Dead
A Song To Ruin

This is true post-hardcore. Not the trendy pop sound permeating from countless Finch wannabe bands. Not that I don't enjoy a lot of the new wave of American bands labelled as post-h/c, its just most don't understand where post-h/c originated. It began in DC with great groups like Fugazi and Rites Of Spring. Million Dead have that raw DC/Dischord sound to them. Their time signatures and rolling rhythm section also have an At The Drive In (there's a band everyone is compared to these days, I feel it is the most suitable here though) feel to them. Current single, 'I Am The Party', is a standout track that best represents this bands sound. MD even has a dreamy song with the title track. It sounds like a slow motion nightmare that won't end until you're forced to slit your own wrists. Gruesome? No, actually quite beautiful and cathartic in an end of pain sort of way. This is one of the best releases from 2003.

Miracle of 86
Every Famous Last Word

Congratulations to Miracle of 86 for shedding the dreaded emo skin they laced their debut self/titled album with. Not that this band was an emo band, (whatever that means anymore), but they had a sound to them that could've led to a Promise Ring-like path. Thankfully they kept the sound and lyrics very light-hearted here. This CD is just a feel-good indie album with plenty of influences surfacing. In it, we hear rock-a-billy, country, indie rock, and a little bluegrass. This an ideal summer album that any music fan can appreciate.

The Movielife
Forty-Hour Train Back To Penn

I was a little sceptical of this ba releasing a full-length on Drive Thru Records. I got into this ba because of their great energeti live set. I didn't want to see the lose their edge being surrounde by some of those sugar coatec pop-punk bands. Not that thos bands are all bad, just a tad toc polished for the likes of The Movielife. I was very surprise when I heard the title track. Th was already better than anythir the band previously released. T one benefit that stands out fror being on Drive-Thru is the emphasis on Vinnie's vocals. Tl is very apparent on the beautifi 'Kelly's Song'. The Movielife lost nothing jumping labels; the in fact, only gained. I'm sorry f doubting you guys. [In Oct. TH Movielife called it quits. RIP]

The Murder City Devil
R.I.P.

Singer Spencer Moody begir this final MCD show by stating that he hopes the band "don't disappoint". Anyone who has ev heard this band knows they can NOT disappoint. This is one of the best and most original bands of our time. I kick myself everyday since I passed on an opportunity to see them live a fe years ago at The Church (1st Unitarian, Philadelphia).

So a live CD is what I have t settle for. This CD also acts as a sort of best of... collection with there greatest songs on it in addition to two new tracks (whi are outstanding). Now some reviews will jump on them for being sloppy on this release, anc they are. It does not matter how drunk and messy, this record is still better than any live CD I ha heard. This album makes me believe I was at the show. In oth

words it sounds like a live record should…raw!

My Chemical Romance
I Brought You My Bullets, You Brought Me Your Love

This band has unjustly been dubbed a Thursday rip-off by some back home in New Jersey. It is a foolish comment. Just because they formed after singer Gerard Way was blown away after witnessing a Thursday basement show or the fact that Thursday singer nurtured this band after Way handed him a demo. Most probably compare the two since Rickley produced this album though. I don't deny this group has a Thursday feel to them. They also, however, have an early AFI and So Cal punk element to their sound. This band has many different influences and as most young bands do, they showcase them perhaps a little too much. Unlike most young bands though, they already have a unique sound of their own that is coming forward. This CD is filled with brilliant tracks such as 'Early Sunsets Over Monroeville' or 'Honey, This Mirror Isn't Big Enough For The Two Of Us', which musically is reminiscent of 'Ignition' era Offspring. This band has more than just Thursday influencing them. I look forward to hearing this band grow and refine their sound on the next release.

Paint It Black
Cva

Everyone welcome one of the best new hardcore bands around. Forget all those American Nightmare (sorry, Give Up The Ghost!) wannabes. This band are introducing you to what hardcore used to be. Short and quick, straight for the jugular. No tiresome metal noodling, no melodic gimmicks, just hardcore music. Kid Dynamite definitely spawned some kick-ass bands in Paint It Black and also None More Black (a bit of a black fetish I suppose).

Poison The Well
You Come Before You

This is the major label debut from the melodic Florida hardcore crew. Hardcore fundamentalists will dismiss this band for experimenting more musically here. Wait…actually they won't even listen to this because its on a major label. Anyway, this album progresses PTW's sound with the usual brutal singing and urgent rhythm section. Where it advances is the melodic breakdowns that intervene the abrasiveness to near perfection. This band has grown substantially over their 3 full-length releases.

Pretty Girls Make Graves
The New Romance

What a difference from one record to the next. This second full-length album from Seattle's Pretty Girls Make Graves is an electro-rock gem. The band's debut full-length was a good album, however, vocalist Andrea Zollo sounds more relaxed on this effort. Unlike the first CD, these tracks vary nicely in style and mood. It is more layered and detailed instrumentally. Aside from a couple of tracks that sound like they would fit on the debut LP, this record matured immensely. As a quick example, just listen to 'This Is Our Emergency'.

Rancid
Indestructible

I was a little disappointed with the last Rancid album. It was good, but a bit redundant. No track stood separate from another. This CD is a return to the '…And Out Come The Wolves' form. It mixes up Rancid's influences and drops them heavy. The band is best when mixing up their street punk with reggae, pop, ska and even hip-hop. This is definitely the best thing they've released since the aforementioned record in 1996. It might even be better, only time can tell though.

Rock Kills Kid
S/T (EP)

This EP is hard to describe. Therefore I'll cut the press release a little slack. Damned if I hear any Cure in this music! This is pop punk, not as polished or mindless as most within that genre though. The first few songs are really excellent, especially 'Everything To Me'.

After that it becomes a little more mediocre, but it is a debut. These guys are what pop punk should sound like. With a ton of touring under their belts and a release or two, this band will make a name for themselves in a few years. Hopefully it will be better than the band's name.

Rufio
S/T (EP)

In between full-length EP fro much hyped Nitro Records band. As with most bands, you shouldn't believe the hype. Generic pop punk like everything else being forced down the public's throat. Each song on this EP even has an identical structur Fast start, hook and grab guitars, slowed-down rhythm section before launching back into the catchy melody. Generic, boring, and cookie-cut.

Rx Bandits
The Resignation

One the most integrated bands around today. Most people probably still think of them as a ska-punk band. This album move them further away from those early days. This is a very politica album that fuses reggae, punk, ska, and even some metallic guitars. Whether you want to believe it or not, this album is extremely mature and developed. Because of this, it may take a litt longer to get in to it. If you like the politics of reggae with a punk ferocity than you need this recor It's definitely worth owning.

Shai Hulud
That Within Blood Ill-Tempered

With nearly 6 years in betwee full-length albums, the fans are expecting to hear a great record. Look at the more high-profiled Guns-N-Roses. Though it's a totally different line-up, albeit Axl, fans are still drooling in anticipation of the well-publicize 'Chinese Democracy' CD. Some

sources that have heard tracks claim they are lacklustre affairs.

I think Shai Hulud, who are known for changing members like Mr. Potato Head changes hats, is going to feel a similar back draft from fans. I think they will expect more from this album. Yes, it chugs along as hard as any of the band's previous work; however, I feel it is a little flat and forced. If you love metal-core that will blow your ears off, than Shai Hulud still can accomplish this. I feel this CD should have been something bigger though.

Sick Of It All
Life On The Ropes

The New York hardcore veterans are back with another hard-hitting effort. If you love hardcore and Sick Of It All in particular, you will once again be worshipping at SOIA's hardcore altar with this release. Personally this has begun to bore me a bit. For me the only way to intake SOIA is in a small cramped club. They may be sounding redundant in my ears, but they will always be the premier live hardcore act.

The Suicide Machines
A Match And Some Gasoline

Fifth full-length from the classic Detroit punks who moved to SideOneDummy Records from major label, Hollywood, and I think they are a little pissed off. Angry about the U.S. government, about corporate America, and probably that Best Of... CD Hollywood released without their permission. Some of my friends stopped listening to SM after 'Battle Hymns'. Well this is a return to that form. A ton of angry politically oriented punk/hardcore songs with a few ska-punk songs thrown in to lighten the mood now and again. Remarkable album even the jaded old-school SM fans will love.

Swingin' Utters
Dead Flowers, Bottles, Bluegrass and Bones

Just when you think these San Francisco punks can't top themselves with their last album, S/T, they release this gem. Street punk, folk, barroom rock, bluegrass, rock-a-billy, they cover it all seamlessly. The songs, 'All That I Can Give', 'Lampshade', 'If You Want Me To' and the title track are all instant classics. This CD could fit into any music collection. If you don't own this record, you are simply foolish!

Thrice
The Artist In The Ambulance

Wow! What an amazing album! I've never been a huge fan of Thrice. I have always appreciated their music and found them to be a more than capable live act though. They have always pushed the boundaries of this so-called post-hardcore revival. Thrice don't sound like the others, though; they are better musicians than most. They also do something most of these other cookie-cut bands don't; try new approaches to their songs. With 'TAITA', Thrice have taken all of those odd time signatures, break-neck riffs, and intelligent lyrics and crafted a perfect album that pushes anything else within the genre. First single 'All That's Left' is an angry revolutionary chant. 'Silhouette' is the most brutal love song I've heard in a long while. This album is reflective and painful, yet most importantly, hopeful and promising. This without a doubt is the album of the year.

Throw Rag
Desert Shores

Bands that use a washboard, cowbells, and a bugle in their punk songs are definitely going to endear themselves to me instantly. Throw Rag have a fresh and jubilant pub rock sound that reminds me of the Swingin' Utters on crack. Their guitars also have a surf-rock groove to them. Singer Captain Sean-Doe has one of the best punk voices of our time. With more spit and snarl than any Johnny Rotten wannabe. Buy this CD now! You won't stop listening to 'Mission's Message' and its killer washboard/cowbell solo.

Thursday
War All The Time

The New Jersey boys release the major label debut. Unfortunatel they have to try and follow up tl amazingly perfect 'Full Collaps LP. Many felt they would follo the sound they previewed with 'Jet Black New Year', the lonc new track on last year's 'Five Stories Falling' EP. You won' hear anything similar on 'War A The Time'. Neither, will you he 'Full Collapse' Part 2. Vocalis Geoff Rickley claims the title refers to day-to-day troubles an the inner war one faces when i confronted with these problem daily. This album is definitely toned down effort from the Thursday camp. It is still excellent, just not 'Full Collaps and I think that is the point.

The Used
Maybe Memories

This CD/DVD release is pathetic! Its supposed to keep fa busy while awaiting the new ful length. It features live cuts, demos, and 3 unreleased songs. The live tracks sound horrible. The vocals are mixed too high a Bert sounds awful, like he's tryi too hard. Also the live cuts are the same tracks that appear on tl live performance DVD. Kind of waste in my mind. The unreleas tracks are worth a listen. particularly 'Alone This Holida

The DVD features the aforementioned live performanc that sounds awful. The footage i shot well though. It includes all music videos plus two 'the making of' video features. Also video diary is included where th band try and convince the viewe how bad they had it before the recent fame. This as well as footage of others rambling on about how great The Used are a how they're going to change the face of music (yeah right!). All this makes for a waste of time. I would only recommend this for the most avid and loyal fans.

Shane MacGowan

And The Popes

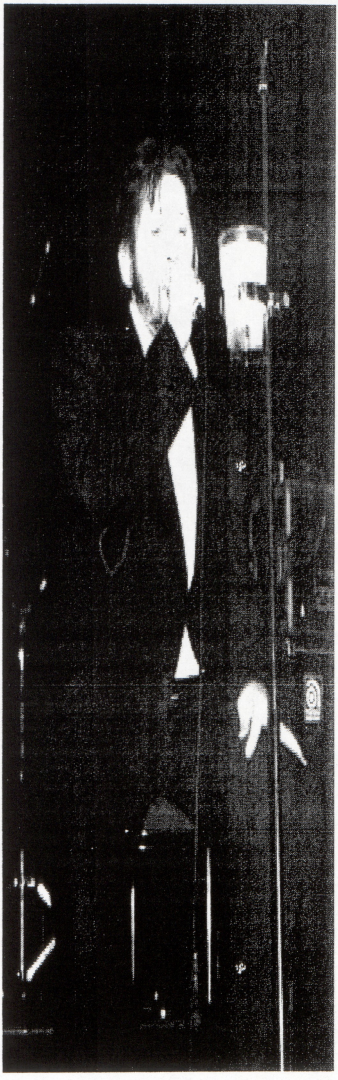
Olympia Theatre
March 14 2003

Lets face it, there's only one reason Mr MacGowan still packs a venue, especially in Dublin. He's a novelty act gone wrong. The fans show up to see how bad the poor sod will fuck-up. Tonight he did not disappoint. It's become a tad sad to see such a marvellous songwriter wither away. It's always been part of Shane's character, mystique if you will, that he drink copious amounts on a daily basis. Obviously the potion has taken its toll on his body over the years. Shane MacGowan of late has become an over bloated clown.

A friend and myself missed the dart into town so if there was an opening performance we missed it. We spent the next couple of hours doing what everyone at Shane's shows should, enjoying a few pints. I'm beginning to think Shane's repeated tardiness is a ploy to allow the crowd to consume enough drink as to not notice his inability to sing properly, anymore. This way the venue can transform into one large drunk tank with its occupants singing along to whichever wino is the loudest. In this case the man with the microphone, Shane.

When Shane finally took to the stage, he was in such poor shape he had to perch upon a stool in front of his mic stand. The sad bastard couldn't even hold the mic still. I actually began feeling sorry for him. This didn't last long, as I found myself laughing hysterically when he sang the wrong song as his guitarist was frantically trying to stop the other Popes from playing. The next few moment were spent with various members of the band attempting to explain to Shane which song he should be crooning. All the while the crowd laughed and chanted "Shane, Shane" over and over again.

Near the end of the set Shane rose from his stool to join his mother in a routine rendition of 'Fairytale Of New York'. This song obviously received the warmest and loudest reception from the drunken spectators. The night ended and it was a typical Shane MacGowan show; he was late, he was drunk, he slurred the wrong lyrics, at least he didn't however, fall flat on his face like the last time I saw him in NY. I left the Olympia that night with mixed feelings for the gig and Shane in general. He was entertaining in a jester sort of way; however, you have to feel for someone who has so much potential. Instead of using his musical talents he chooses to showcase his drinking abilities. In my opinion he should hang up his live career and save his fans the agony of watching him deteriorate in front of their eyes. Unless of course the Pogues want to reunite again for a show or two.



FINCH

Support: Mixtwitch

Temple Bar Music Centre
March 31 2003

I entered this show with a high level of anticipation. Having seen Finch twice before, I knew just what they are capable of. The night began with Mixtwitch. They were nothing to get excited about, mixing some decent punk with plenty of ska-provoked riffs. They were rough around the edges and lacking any bite or originality. They also seemed to have trouble adapting to the larger stage and crowd, never getting the crowd into it.

At nine o'clock the house music halted and the lights extinguished to the crackling sounds of the tormented piano that trails the final listed track on Finch's debut full-length, 'What It Is To Burn'. From there the band blasted through most of the tracks from that album. The crowd was with them the whole way. The only hiccup occurred when guitarist Randy, mistakenly referred to the show as "the last date of their UK tour". Needless to say the Dublin crowd didn't appreciate the statement, but they soon enough forgave him.

Highlights from the night included 'Awake', which broke into an exasperating fury mid-song and a new track that singer Nate claimed, was only written a week earlier. The crowd obviously erupted like an overdue volcano once the band launched into the debut UK single, 'Letters To You' often drowning out Nate during the choruses.

The evening came to a close with a two-song encore. 'Ender' began with only a lone guitar strumming tepidly as Nate, seated on the stage, crooned the opening lyrics softly before being joined onstage by the remaining bands members for the climatic finish. Finch closed the night with an extraordinary take on the title track from their record. It was a phenomenal finale. Finch showed why, after less than two years on the scene, they are already one of the best and most popular bands.

Glassjaw

Support: Dredg

Temple Bar Music Centre
April 05 2003

There was a buzz for quite sometime regarding this show. I believe the British media had a lot to do with it. For weeks UK music magazines had been ranting about Glassjaw aborting their previous two tours to the UK, due to singer Daryl Palumbo's well-documented illness. Well this time they made it, (although they would go on to cancel some of the final shows of the tour because of the aforementioned sickness) and they began on the Emerald Isle.

The support for the night came from American group, Dredg. This band invoke an intensity that rivals Hot Water Music while supplying plenty moody and intricate manners a la the Depeche Mode. The band was excellent, especially the free styling at the end of their set by the drummer while the group packed equipment slowly removing more and more of the drum kit while he continued to play with what he was left with. Shortly after this entertaining spectacle, the crowd swelled with anticipation and they would soon be rewarded.

The members of Glassjaw poured onto the stage. And there stood Daryl at the lip of the stage with a comical grin on his face that would not vanquish for the entirety of the evening. Before the packed house had time to reach a fevered pitch, the band burst into 'Tip Your Bartender', the opening track on their sophomore effort; 'Worship And Tribute'.

The band unleashed a stringent assault on the Irish crowd, only relenting for the calm sing-along of 'Ape Dos Mil'. They ploughed through a healthy dose from each of their two albums including 'Siberian Kiss' and 'When One Eight Becomes Two Zeros' from their debut album 'Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About Silence'. 'Radio Cambodia', Cosmopolitan Blood Loss' and Mu Empire represented the second LP.

Throughout the set, Daryl kept thanking the crowd for attending. I feel the crowd should be thanking him. It's nice to see someone put the music ahead of his own personal problems, no matter how significant.

Dropkick Murphy's

Support: Blood or Whiskey

The Village
April 17 2003

One word describes this show... chaos! Before we discuss the Murphy's set, lets talk about opening band Blood Or Whiskey. I've been itching to see these guys since I bought their self-titled debut nearly a year ago. They opened with 'Drunken Priest Of Dingle' and stormed through seventeen numbers of near perfect aggro-Celt rock. Some songs included 'Never Be Me' and 'Follow Me Up To Carlow' from their amazing second LP 'No Time To Explain'. If you ever get the opportunity to catch these guys and like your traditional Irish folk music punked up a bit like the Pogues, than go see them. You won't regret the decision. In the meantime go and buy one of their excellent albums.

What can I say about the Dropkick Murphy's? They absolutely do not disappoint! This was definitely the most raucous, drunken and out-of-hand show I've been to for some time; and I loved every second of it! From the opening hockey chants of 'For Boston' through the entirety of the set, bodies were flung about like carcasses in a bad horror flick. It was a rarity not to see a shirtless sweat-soaked stage diver perusing the stage during the show. The more bodies that trekked across the stage, the more pints that were sacrificed.

'Boys On The Dock', 'Dirty Glass', 'The Gauntlet', it didn't matter; every song was the crowd favourite. The Murphy's could do no wrong. Even the newer songs went over extremely well, especially Woody Guthrie's 'Gonna Be A Blackout Tonight'.

For a typical Murphy's finale, half the audience ended up on stage while the road crew fought to save equipment. Bassist Ken sought refuge at the top of a speaker stack to finish the song before a stage dive that ironically landed him on stage, rather than off it. The Irish crowd could care less that the Dropkick's aren't from Ireland; they throw a better show then any Irish band.

Hot Water Music

Support: Donots

Whelan's
May 15 2003

Hot Water Music playing Whelan's on my Birthday, I wouldn't have missed it for the world! Unfortunately a lot of people in Dublin did. Whelan's is an ideal small venue on Wexford Street, and it wasn't even close to capacity. Obviously the Irish have yet to pick up on one of the best American bands of recent years. Hot Water Music have been releasing top-notch music since the early to mid-90's. You wouldn't realize it from tonight's showing, but these guys have built quite a following in the States since the release of their acclaimed 'A Flight And A Crash' album on Epitaph Records.

Nevertheless, the night began with Germanic punks, the Donots. The group tackled the punk blueprint well enough but they lacked any distinct originality. They had to play to a crowd of under a 100 and they managed to get some of the people's heads bobbing. I did, however, cringe for every second of their needless cover of Twisted Sister's 'We're Not Gonna Take It'. I thought I was watching a bad college cover band.

After a very speedy changeover, Hot Water Music hit the stage in front of a slightly larger crowd than the openers had. They began the night with 'A Flight And A Crash' off the aforementioned record. The group rolled through 14 tracks tonight with the majority being plucked from their acclaimed Epitaph debut. These songs included; 'Paper Thin', 'Swinger' and 'Choked And Separated'.
HWM also threw in a few tunes from their most recent effort, 'Caution', including the tracks 'I Was On A Mountain' and 'Remedy'. The latter of which is absolutely thick and brilliant live.

Overall the show was what you would expect from one of the most underrated, hard-working bands out there today. No gimmicks or needless banter, just some damn fine rock music with some balls. HWM definitely left an impression on this small Irish crowd tonight. Hopefully they'll be back again in Dublin to witness the fruits of their labours.

Flogging Molly

Support: Neck

Whelan's
May 16 2003

Even though front man Dave King is a native Dubliner, this was Flogging Molly's debut appearance in Ireland. The crowd was slow coming in to Whelan's tonight and Neck had to perform to a thin and unenthusiastic crowd. Neck is a group who seemed to represent each age group aside from the elderly. Various members looked between ages 14 and 40. Not that it matters, just a little strange in my eyes. Musically they were traditional Irish-rock with an emphasis on the 'rock'. They had some real solid and decent tunes in the set and could soon become a better-rounded outfit.

By the time Flogging Molly hit the stage, Whelan's had filled up pretty nicely. With cans of Guinness in hand, the band politely greeted the Dublin crowd and strummed into 'Likes Of You Again'. This slowly built the crowd up before bursting it into a drunken frenzy. The commotion was thankfully unrelenting throughout the evening. This as definitely not just a show, but a party as well!

Like reunited friends at the corner pub, FM shared their songs, humour, and booze; passing around cans of stout and a bottle of whiskey. Frolicking through songs such as 'Selfish Man', 'Cruel Mistress' and 'Salty Dog' not one band member (and audience participant for that matter) sported a single thread of dry clothing. In true Irish fashion the party did not end with the finale 'Rare Ould Times', however, the camaderie continued after the show and throughout the night at Whelan's.

The Movielife

Support: Further Seems Forever
Autopilot Off
Anberlin

The Trocadero
(Philadelphia)
July 15 2003

Anberlin is a new band signed to Tooth&Nail. They opened this show admirably but failed to strike any chord with me. It wasn't anything that stood out, just boring I suppose. Punk buzz band of the moment in the States, Autopilot Off were up next. The crowd was ecstatically into this band. They weren't doing anything that hasn't been done a million times before, but they do it damn well. You can't help but sing along to the catchy choruses.

I was only recently turned on to Further Seems Forever. I wasn't big on their debut CD with Chris Carrabba singing, but I picked up the second album, 'How To Start A Fire' when it was released. I quickly fell in love with it. Their live show tonight was something I instantly loathed. Nothing clicked, no intensity or emotion, all the while sounding completely flat. I found myself looking forward to the end of their set.

The Movielife concluded tonight's show. Singer Vinnie walked on stage looking eerily similar to fellow Long Island post-hardcore band Glassjaw's, Daryl Palumbo. They unexpectedly opened with 'Kelly's Song', and I'm glad they did. The Movielife is an exceptional live group and tonight was no exception. Yet another perfect set!

I first fell in love with them after seeing them play live in New Jersey a few year's back. As good as their recorded material is, they are even better in front of a pulsing crowd. Vinnie works the crowd nearly as well as Sick Of It All front man Lou Koller. The audience is as part of the show as the band and that is an aspect that most bands these days seem to forget.

The Explosion

Support: Cave In
Paint It Black
The Faux

1st Unitarian Church
(Philadelphia)
July 29 2003

The Faux are a Jade Tree Records band from Boston. They try layering keyboards and effects over a hardcore foundation (notice I used "try"). They sound as if Milemarker stopped trying to make good music and hired a bad Johnny Rotten impersonator to sing for them. I was thankful when Paint It Black took the stage. The lone non-Bostonian band on the bill thrashed through a number of their short, tight and aggressive songs. They showed their hometown why they are one of the best new hardcore bands around today.

Cave In was added to this bill late. I wish they hadn't been at all! I have never been much of a Cave In fan, especially the new material, now I know I never will be. They were down right awful! They never worked the crowd or seemed to get into it at all themselves. For all the attention the music press has been paying Cave In for the past year, I expected a tighter set at least.

In a gratifying contrast, The Explosion put on one hell of a show! Where do I begin? They were tight, energetic (to say the least), and had the crowd in a state of raucousness throughout their set. For me, they had a perfect live set. Singer, Million Dollar Matt Hock (what a ingenious name), was one with the crowd. Even his sly remarks fit perfect in between lyrics, very punk! This is the best pure punk band to emerge for years.

My gut feeling was that most of the crowd would come to watch Cave In with all the trendy hype surrounding them. It was, however, obvious they were here for The Explosion, as they should have been!

From Autumn To Ashes

Support: Cave In
Everytime I Die
Funeral For A Friend

Theater Of Living Arts
(Philadelphia)
Sept 09 2003

First band tonight is Funeral For A Friend. I've seen plenty of advertisements in UK magazines of late for these Welsh up-starts. I was anxious to see what the UK had to offer for the US other than Radiohead and Coldplay copycats. I was very impressed. Singer Matt has a wonderful voice, though he struggled a little through some of his screams on the first song or two. The band was tight and sounded well rounded for such a young group.

Everytime I Die brought their ferocious metal meets hardcore act to the stage and blasted a hole through the TLA tonight. EID played a set loaded with songs from their last album 'Hot Damn!' They also managed to sprinkle a few tracks from their debut, 'Last Night In Town'. It was a typical EID set, fast aggressive, short and explosive.

Next up was Cave In. I cannot comprehend the popularity of this band. I think they are complete rubbish! They need an identity. Space rock one moment, hardcore next, a little metal, and perhaps a small amount of dream-pop to make you nauseous. None of these forms of music are blended coercively.

From Autumn To Ashes overtook the stage last. Vocalist Ben barked out such oldies as 'Cherry Kiss' and 'Capeside Rock'. Some new songs from 'The Fiction We Live', which was released today, were included in the set. They seemed to intertwine nicely with the older songs. Some of these songs seem a lot more melodic with drummer Fran singing more on them. The one track that definitely isn't too melodic is the beautifully horrific 'The After Dinner Payback'. Even if the new material is more melodic, that doesn't mean they can't still pound you into submission during their live show. The only complaint I have is the shortened version they played of 'Short Stories With Tragic Endings'. This has always been my favourite live song within their set. I was a little angered at getting an edited version of it tonight though. It was, however, the only blemish.

Rancid

Support: The Fight
The Keds

The Olympia
Sept 22 2003

Opening the night were The Keds, a local Irish band that landed the support slot of a lifetime. The Keds pumped out some decent pop punk tunes but sounded a little flat in The Olympia. I think this band would benefit from a smaller stage, venue, and crowd until they can beef up their sound.

The second opening band was the new Fat Wreck signees, The Fight. They are led by an overly excited female singer dubbed K8 that play straight ahead punk songs with a street edge. Throughout their set K8 thanked everyone from Rancid to Fat Wreck Chords for the opportunity to support the punk legends. You can't fault her enthusiasm though. Any young band would act similar if not more extreme. The band definitely sound as if they have the ability to grow out of their generic sound. Hopefully these kids will mature quickly because there is plenty of redundancy in punk rock these days.

The moment everyone in the house was here for was very apparent as the East Bay punks hit the stage and burst into the classic 'Ruby Soho'. The entire venue sang along to the chorus as they did later for 'Roots Radical', 'Journey To The End Of The East Bay' and new single 'Fall Back Down'. I don't feel its possible for Rancid to ever do wrong. Tonight was definitely not different. The set was heavy with classics, which kept the crowd into it.

Even the songs from the new 'Indestructible' record went over extremely well including when roadie and Transplants front man Rob Aston joined the group for 'Red Hot Moon'. It's hard to pin down what Rancid do best. After all they do everything so well. Their aggressive street punk songs fit perfectly next to their more bouncy sing-along numbers. Rancid are definitely an essential band to see live. If you haven't seen them live, you need to. If you have, see them again they only get better.

Alkaline Trio

Support: In Theory

The Temple Bar Music Centre
Sept 27 2003

I was waiting for this show for a while. It seems whenever the Trio play Philadelphia or New Jersey (where I am from); I either had unbreakable plans (i.e. weddings) or I was here in Dublin. So, thankfully they decided to play this city when I was here. I was finally able to catch a full set (I watched them play at the Warped Tour in 2002).

Opening band In Theory actually impressed me fairly well. It was a shame the crowd didn't seem to appreciate them aside from a few on-lookers. The fact that their sound is hard to describe was the most appealing aspect. For once we weren't stuck listening to some generic pop punk band gone wrong. They were definitely a punk band in my eyes though. They placed a considerable emphasis on melody while retaining plenty of energy.

Alkaline Trio have a poor reputation as a live band. I was hoping they would discredit that accusation tonight. Honestly, I can't say they did or didn't. Certainly the show was fun. The band began with 'This Could Be Love' and 'We've Had Enough' the first two tracks off their most recent effort 'Good Mourning'. They played a few off that record including 'All On Black' and 'Continental'.

Some classics were churned out in the forms of 'Maybe I'll Catch Fire', 'Private Eye' and 'I Lied My Face Off'. The set also included the live staple 'Radio' which came off a bit messy and flat in comparison to the other time I saw them live. Matt playfully donned a tiara for one song after a young girl threw it his way. That was the only real visual aspect of the show. The group showed very little enthusiasm, perhaps the overseas tour caught up with them.

This is why I have mixed feelings about this show. A3 have plenty of grade A songs at their disposal but they rarely interact on any level with the audience. It's as if the are playing a huge stadium with twenty feet in between them and the crowd. I understand that some bands like the music to speak for itself, but I can put on their CD anytime. I want something different at the show.

Funeral For A Friend

Support: On/Off

The Temple Bar Music Centre
Oct 19 2003

I was expecting a bill that saw the brilliantly live Movielife and the new press favourite Million Dead opening for Funeral For A Friend. So I was quite disappointed to hear, a few weeks prior to the show that the Movielife called it quits. Not until the actual show did I find out Million Dead weren't playing either due to a communication problem. So we were left with the young Dublin punks On/Off to open the show.

On/Off were quite admirable. I expected a lot less under the circumstances. A young inexperienced band asked to open for the hottest UK band on such short notice. On/Off kept the crowds interest throughout their set, not an easy task. The group is a punk band that mixes enough pop hooks to be melodic and catchy without being irritating. They aren't overly aggressive or sloppy either, which is surprising for such a young band. I look forward to seeing more from them.

Funeral For A Friend march on stage and jump right into their current single, 'She Drove Me To Daytime Television'. The group are already a tight live band and seemed to really improve from the Philadelphia show I saw them at, a little over a month previously. The band benefited from the longer set and had a more bulky sound going for them. Obviously the group has little material, with only one full length under their belts, but they delivered those tracks in gigantic fashion.

Songs like 'Rookie Of The Year', 'Bullet Theory' and 'Storytelling' all benefit live. Matt really seems to roar and croon his lyrics with a bruise and bandage mentality. The dual guitar assault of Kris and Darren is likewise impressive. The stop/start motions of the band remind me of a more poppy version of Delaware titans Boy Sets Fire. FFAF is as good as the media portrays them. Its very rare I ever believe or indulge in the hype. I can't help myself in this case.

Million Dead

Support: Berkeley
20 Bulls Each

The Hub
Nov 7 2003

I'm walking into this show with little knowledge of this band. I searched Dublin high and low for Million Dead's debut record, but to no avail. I caught a couple of videos on TV, so I do have a miniscule feel for their sound. The first group tonight were 20 Bulls Each. Not a bad set at all musically. The group looks as if they'd chew their own arms off to be anywhere but performing tonight though. Not exactly the way to win new fans! They play a sped-up ballsy type of punk. Not quite street punk or hardcore but not far off from either genre.

I only caught the last song of Berkeley since I had to leave to interview Million Dead before their set. From that one song, they sound like an American rock group like the Pixies or even possibly to a lesser extent Sonic Youth. It was only one song, however. My mate watched their entire set and claimed they were stunning. I hope I can catch the Donegal band again soon to make a more accurate judgement.

Million Dead took to the stage for a short set. If you have yet to hear MD, their sound is tough to describe. Fugazi and At The Drive In come to mind instantly. In using those bands as a comparison, don't think I am suggesting MD sound just like them. Whereas they share elements with those two bands to name a few, you would never confuse their music. Don't expect another cheesy post-hardcore act trying to cash in on a trend either. MD play original post-hardcore in a Dischord vein. The rhythm section rolls along coercively despite the shoddy sound in The Hub tonight. Cameron's guitar kicks and screams like a horror movie heroine. On top of this, lie Frank's vocals. I honestly find it impossible to compare his singing to anything off the top of my head. Therefore I won't do the band and Frank any injustice by attempting to.

To be honest, I was very shocked tonight. Not only by MD's performance, but also by the lack of a crowd tonight. I expected the tiny Hub to be jammed this evening. The band is more relevant then you think.

The Hope Conspiracy

Support: The Steam Pig
Coldwar

Whelan's
Nov 19 2003

The Hope Conspiracy are one of the few good hardcore bands around today. And unlike most of today's hardcore crews they don't seem too concerned with giving the listener soft melodic intervals to relax their ears. THC are far from the current post-hardcore, emo-core, or screamo (whatever you wish to dub them) bands over saturating the US market. Don't get me wrong, they incorporate melody in their songs, however, it is brutal ear-pounding melody. Tonight THC brings their long European tour to Dublin.

Local three-piece punk band, The Steam Pig took to the stage first. Quick, noisy and rough, exactly what a real punk band should sound like! No annoying pop hooks or unnecessary synchronized pogoing. They were a welcome start to the evening.

Coldwar had second billing tonight. These guys play a thrash metal style owing a lot to early Slayer but not quite as convincing. This really isn't my type of music and I don't want to misjudge this band, so I will leave it at that.

The Hope Conspiracy entered the stage in front of a thin and scattered Dublin crowd. Singer Kevin began by asking the crowd if they wanted them to give "110%"? Obviously the crowd cheered. He then made one thing clear, the audience had to give the band 110% in return. He gestured to the nearly vacant front of the stage and asked the crowd to move up. "If you're happy, we're happy", THC wanted a hardcore show tonight. Kevin tried to emphasis it was a mutual participation event. Sadly, aside from a small number of kids, the crowd never seemed to care about the show. It clearly frustrated Kevin.

In between songs, Kevin continued to try and motivate some sort of reaction from the crowd. On one occasion a heckler threw a few unnecessary taunts towards the stage. Kevin clearly got the best of him by pointing out that the band was going nowhere, they already had his money, and he was free to leave if he didn't like what he heard. The heckler never spoke out again. Hopefully he left. I didn't notice; I was enjoying the rest of a great set.

THC played a damn fine set despite the audience only giving about 10% of that 110%. Almost the entire set compromised of the bands last record 'Endnote'. A brilliant album every hardcore, or punk fan for that matter, should own. THC ended their set by dedicating the superb song 'For Love' to a female member of the audience who was celebrating her birthday this evening. Hopefully the punk fans in Dublin will come out more often for great underground bands like this. Tonight was a little embarrassing from the audience end of the show.

Stiff Little Fingers

Support: The Things

The Village
Dec 12 2003

I came to this show expecting to see Blood Or Whiskey opening for the Belfast legends. Unfortunately BOW have decided to cancel their remaining gigs this month due to the absence of their tin whistle player (currently holed up in Mountjoy Prison awaiting possible deportation). Instead of seeing a great opening band, I instead get a band that damn well may be almost as wonderful. The Things left me feeling pleasantly surprised. I've yet to hear this band and will be inclined to check them out further. They have a garage rock sound to them, but not in the trendy, wussy Strokes sort of way. More in the vein of The Stooges or New York Dolls.

I have yet to catch Stiff Little Fingers live yet. I know it is utter blasphemy on my part. I somehow miss my chance at seeing these Irish punk rock legends. I was thrown back slightly at the sight of four middle-aged men in turquoise blue dress shirts. They looked like extras for a 1985 Miami Vice episode. Looks, however, are usually deceiving; as they are tonight. Simply put, SLF are still a great rock band. It is evident tonight when the group includes new tracks such as 'Guitar And Drum' and 'Strummerville' (obviously a tribute to the late, great Joe Strummer).

The band is still pretty damn energetic and seemed to enjoy themselves throughout the night. For anyone who may think SLF are another cabaret punk act of yesteryear (such as the Sex Pistols) cashing in on punk's current popularity, forget it! It is apparent by the new songs that these men can still pump out a great rock song. This doesn't mean they left out classics like 'Alternative Ulster' and 'Wastes Life' (possibly the best punk song ever written). The show included two short encores. The second consisting of only one song. Everyone knows though, which song it was. The night finished with the crowd shouting every line of the classic 'Suspect Device'.

Flogging Molly

Support: Throw Rag

Temple Bar Music Centre
Dec 13 2003

It was the second time Flogging Molly has played Dublin in the past six months. Their first visit in May must have left an impression on them. It doesn't hurt to have a native Dubliner fronting the group. Opening band Throw Rag had to play to a thin crowd as most were at the bar during their set. They missed one of the best new bands I've seen in a long time. These guys had great songs ('Mission's Message' and 'Demon's In A Row' to list just two) and a superb live show. I don't know where to start, singer Captain Sean-Doe looks like Chris Isaak on speedballs. And washboard/cowbell/bugle player, Action Craig Jackman (AKA Jacko) is least to say 'a character'. What about the music? I would call it surf punk, but that still wouldn't describe everything going on there. Maybe if the Swingin' Utters took up surfing and played the seediest pubs in the middle-of-nowhere Texas. Oh well, however you describe it, it kicks serious ass!

Flogging Molly came on to the stage to the crowd's enthusiasm and raised drinks. There isn't much I can say about a FM show that I, as well as anyone else, who has seen them, have said a thousand times before. Go see this band live! If you think they sound excellent on record/CD (which they do) they are ten-fold better live. This is the fifth time I personally have seen them in various sized venues. They are ALWAYS great! Top-notch song-writing, excellent musicianship and an audience ready to party.

FM pumped out the usual great songs from their two records. Once again opening with 'The Likes Of You Again'. They also offered some classics such as 'Swagger', 'Selfish Man' and 'Salty Dog' to name a few from their debut studio album 'Swagger'. From their second LP they kicked out the title track 'Drunken Lullabies', 'Rebels Of The Sacred Heart' and 'Death Valley Queen'. I can go on all night about FM and their superior live show, but you will only understand my rants by checking them out for yourself.

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